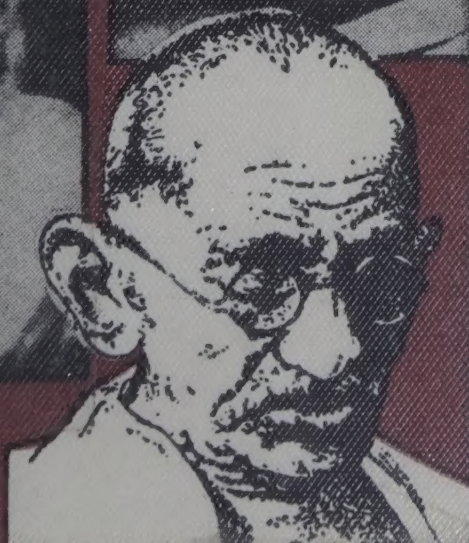
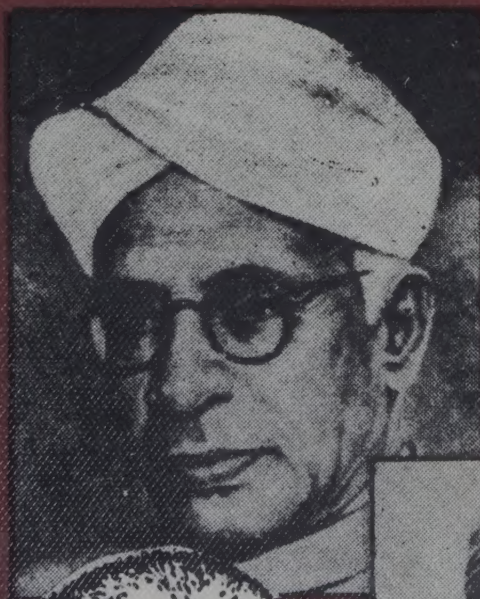
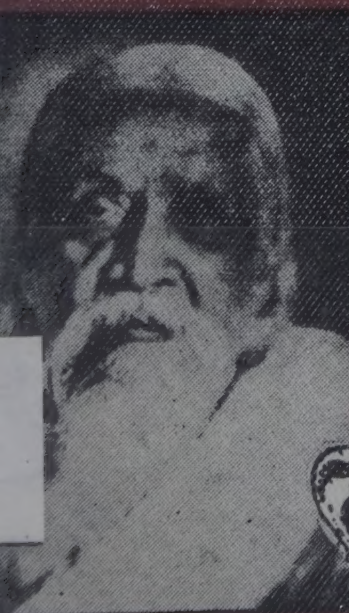
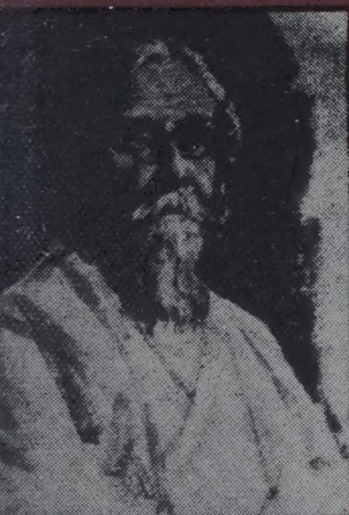


CONTEMPORARY INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

R. N. Sharma



Besides being a general reference work for the teachers and researchers, this book is particularly meant to serve as a textbook for the University students. It systematically analyses and evaluates the philosophy of Annie Besant, Dayananda, Ram Krishna, Vivekanand, Sri Aurobindo, M.K. Gandhi, Rabindra Nath Tagore and S. Radhakrishnan with particular reference to their contribution to Epistemology, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of History, Social Philosophy, Philosophy of Economic Reconstruction and Political Philosophy. In the end it summarises their common agreements and gives critical evaluation showing inconsistencies as well as present day relevance. With its characteristic analytic presentation and synthetic judgement the book is bound to be useful for the researcher and the layman, the teacher as well as the student of the subject.

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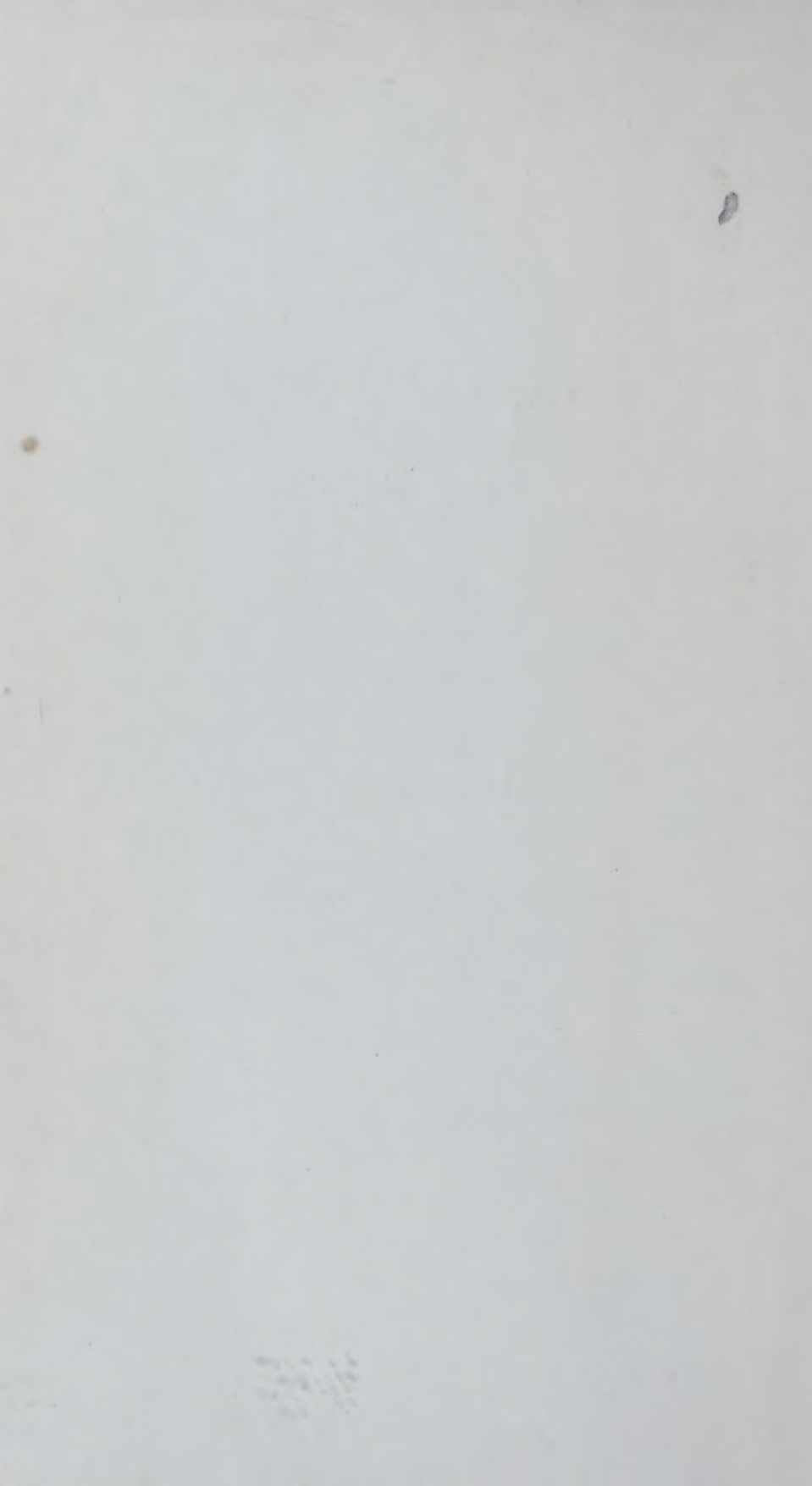


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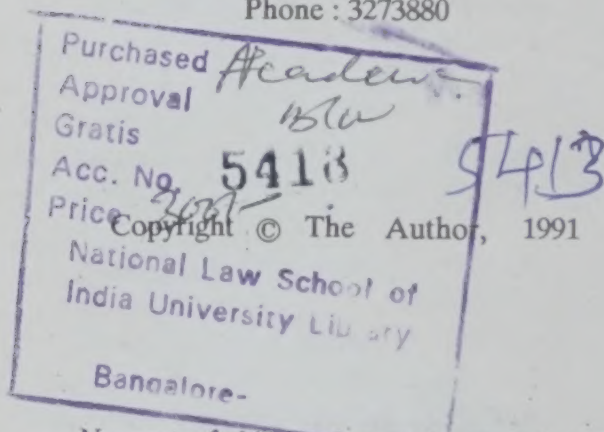
Ram Nath Sharma

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Published by
ATLANTIC PUBLISHERS AND DISTRIBUTORS
B-2, Vishal Enclave, New Delhi - 27
Phone: 5413460

Sales office
4215/1, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj
New Delhi - 110002
Phone : 3273880



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Typeset at
APD Computer Graphics
B-2, Vishal Enclave, N. Delhi - 27

Printed in India at
Mehra Offset Press
New Delhi

PREFACE

Contemporary Indian philosophy has become more important in our time due to the pressing need of the solution of the problems concerning epistemology, metaphysics, religion, history, society, social institutions, national and international relations, economic reconstruction, politics and political institutions. Like the ancient Indian philosophers contemporary Indian philosophers have advanced significant theories in all these fields. A systematic and critical evaluation of the philosophy of contemporary Indian thinkers has been attempted in this work.

Contemporary Indian Philosophy is a vast subject showing several trends such as idealism, realism, eclecticism, revivalism, humanism etc. All these trends cannot be comprehended in one single volume. Therefore, the author has limited his study to the idealist and integralist trend and in it too reference has been made to only more important philosophers: Annie Besant, Dayananda, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, R.N. Tagore, M.K. Gandhi and S. Radhakrishnan. As these represent the idealist trend in all its details the present study has not gone into details of the philosophy of their contemporary Indian idealist thinkers.

Now, before dealing in details with the philosophy of the above-mentioned important contemporary Indian philosophers the author has explained the Neo-Vedanta traditions of India so that the philosophical background of the theories propounded by the contemporary Indian thinkers may be clarified. In the end, after a detailed analysis of the philosophies of the above-mentioned eight contemporary Indian philosophers, a comparative survey of their views has been attempted in the last chapter. The last chapter also includes the concluding and critical remarks.

It is heartening to note that contemporary Indian philosophy has been included as a full-fledged paper in the post-graduate syllabi of almost all the Indian Universities and in the undergraduate syllabi of some universities. The present book has been

written not only to serve as a reference work for more ardent researchers and teachers of philosophy but to serve as an ideal text book for the University students of this subject. Therefore the author has everywhere employed his usual analytic method of presentation of the subject matter through a vast variety of headings and sub-headings. This is the only claim of originality if such a claim is at all required in writing a book like this.

In the end, the author will indulgently look forward to the remarks and suggestions from the readers, whose satisfaction has been an important criterion of evaluation for him.

RAM NATH SHARMA

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1

INTRODUCTORY

The tradition of Indian philosophical thought continues unhindered since the propagation of the ancient Vedanta philosophy. From the great Upanishads to the contemporary Indian philosophers including Vivekananda, M.K. Gandhi, R.N. Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and S. Radhakrishnan there has been an unbroken chain of Indian philosophers who meditated upon the nature of self and that of the cosmos and deduced social and political ideologies. Based upon intuitive truths Indian philosophy is characterized by an incessant search for ultimate truths. According to the ancient Vedanta philosophy the ultimate reality is Brahman. This Brahman verily, is the self. The Mahavakyas—*Aham Brahma-Asmi*, *Tat Twām Asi*, *Sarvam Khalividam Brahma*, were used to explain the unity of macrocosm and microcosm. This again is the central idea in the metaphysics of contemporary Indian philosophers, the more important of which have been named above. Thus the central teaching of Vivekananda, is the same as that of Vedanta, expressed in the language understandable to the modern man. According to him, “In the Advaita Philosophy, the whole universe is one in the self which is called ‘Brahman’. That self when it appears behind the universe is called ‘God’. The same self when it appears behind this little universe, the body, the soul... Universal self which is beyond the universal modification of ‘Prakriti’ is what is called ‘Isvara’, the Supreme Ruler, God.”¹

Indian philosophy is again characterized by the unity of metaphysics, cosmology and axiology. The concepts of immortality and freedom are the characteristic of human being. It is so since, man, according to Indian philosophy, is neither body, nor mind, nor intellect but the self.

From the metaphysical principle follows the axiological ideal of liberation. According to Indian philosophy liberation is the

ultimate goal of all human beings. One of the noblest prayers in all literature occurs in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, "Lead me from falsehood unto truth, from darkness lead me unto light, from death lead me unto immortality." This has been also the quest of the evolutionary process among the human beings. Presenting the characteristics of Indian philosophy of history R.N. Tagore said, "Man's history is the history of his journey to the unknown in the quest of the realization of his 'immortal self – his soul. Through the rise and fall of empires : through the building up of gigantic piles of wealth and the ruthless scattering of them upon the dust ; through the creation of vast bodies of symbols that give shape to his dramas and aspirations, and the casting of them away like the playthings of an outworn infancy; through the forging of his magic keys with which to unlock the mysteries of creation, and through his throwing away of this labour of ages to go back to his worship and work afresh in some new form ; yes: through it all man is marching from epoch towards the fullest realization of his soul, the soul which is greater than the things man accumulates, the deeds he accomplishes, the themes he builds, the soul whose onward course is never-checked by death or dissolution."²

The First Awakening

The present upheaval in Indian philosophical thought may be traced to the eighth decade of 17th Century when Rajaram Mohan Roy was born in 1772. Almost for a whole century there was no other illustrious social or political thinker in India besides Ram Mohan. Ram Mohan was the first awakening of the Indian consciousness from the slumbers of last several centuries due to long slavery in the form of a critical revaluation of the contemporary down-trodden condition of Indian masses. It was in the consciousness of Ram Mohan that the Indian elite, impressed by the concepts of social liberty and equality in the West, felt that the same liberty and equality should be created in Indian society. Ram Mohan, therefore, raised his voice against the exploitation of the backward classes particularly the women and the untouchables. He worked hard to abolish their disabilities and bring out not only social reforms but political reforms through the enactment of new social legislations.

Renaissance Movement

After Ram Mohan another wave of social and political reforms

in the country was visible in the 19th century.

Among the notable contributors to this movement were Keshav Chandra Sen, Dayanand, Annie Besant and Ramakrishna Paramhansa. These were active in the second half of the 18th century right upto the beginning of the 19th century.

Arrival of Great Social Philosophers

Great men are born when the nation faces a challenge and fails to answer it by the usual and normal means. The *Bhagwadgita* has emphasized the ancient faith that whenever human beings are found insufficient there is some divine interference, some divine incarnation to overcome difficulties. After the failure of the War of independence in 1857 India witnessed the birth of such great men within a decade that since then the country did not witness another class of such great leaders. Rabindranath Tagore was born in 1861, Vivekananda in 1863 and M.K. Gandhi in 1869. Close after him was born Sri Aurobindo in 1872. Thus in the 7th decade of 19th Century four illustrious great men were born in India whose fame did not confine to India alone but spread throughout all the corners of the world. As these three great social philosophers were born within eight years period of the 7th decade of 19th Century it is clear that they were brought up in similar social and political circumstances. Then in the 5th decade of the 20th Century three great sons of this country passed away. Rabindra died in 1941. Gandhi breathed his last in 1948 and Sri Aurobindo took Maha Samadhi in 1950. After this the country never recovered the loss and there has always been a dirth of great men of the eminence of these great leaders. Vivekananda came to India almost like a titan and died at an early age of 39 in 1902. These dates show that the philosophical thought in contemporary times was on the one hand a result of social and political circumstances and on the other hand a result of the ancient Indian tradition which started right from the Upanishads.

NEO-VEDANTA METAPHYSICS

Neo-Vedanta World View

Contemporary Indian philosophers presented philosophies which were based on the metaphysical background of Neo-vedanta. Neo-vedanta is vedanta first and neo-next. It is vedanta so far as

according to it the ultimate reality is the Brahman, the Absolute, the all embracing spiritual reality, the Sachhidananda. This Brahman is everywhere and all human beings and nationalities are its different manifestations. This multiplicity has its essential unity in Brahman. The ancient vadanta has not clearly admitted the reality of this world. Therefore Shankara's interpretation of the world as Maya has been most popular in this country. From the point of view of social philosophy this was unfortunate though ironically Shankar was not only the greatest philosopher that India has produced but almost the greatest social reformer of his time. His shadow extended throughout centuries and even upto our contemporary times. The Neo-vedanta of Vivekananda itself could not absolutely free from the shadow of Advaita vadanta of Shankaracharya. In spite of his eloquent urgings to Indian masses to rise and awake and to improve their physical conditions, Vivekananda did not challenge the Mayavada of Advaita but rather supported it in many of his lectures. Rabindranath Tagore and M.K. Gandhi, on the other hand, were not so much influenced by Mayavada, probably due to the reason that while Vivekananda was first and last a philosopher and a Sanyasin, neither Tagore nor Gandhi were either philosophers or Sanyasins but were social and political thinkers and leaders. Rabindranath Tagore had his command first over literature and then on social and political thinking and only ultimately in religion and philosophy. M.K. Gandhi, essentially a religious man, derived his religion from Bhagwadgita, read Qoran and Bible but was not so much impressed by the philosophical aspects. Both these thinkers however, were essentially vedantins. It was only Sri Aurobindo who challenged the Mayavada of Advaita vedanta, showed its defects and presented an alternative theory of the world in the form of his theory of Lila. But in spite of their basis in Vedanta philosophy none of our contemporary philosophers including Vivekananda, Tagore and Gandhi preached about the illusory nature of the world. They, on the other hand, emphasized that multiplicity is as much real as the unity since the essence of Indian culture is unity in diversity.

Unity in Diversity

It was due to the influence of the metaphysical principle of unity in diversity that all these thinkers considered individual liberty and variety as contributing to the richness of national solidarity and unity. Again, it was on the basis of this metaphysical principle that they advocated the principle of unity in diversity in

the international field. All of them were internationalists and cosmopolitans but they considered the maintenance of the individuality of each nation necessary for the richness of humanity. Each nation, according to them, has to make a significant contribution to the human fraternity, through its unique characteristics. Therefore, for the good of the humanity on this planet we need not abolish the individualities of the nations, we should rather encourage them. This line of thought has been also encouraged by the ancient Indian emphasis on Swadharma.

The Concept of Swadharma

In the understanding of contemporary Indian philosophy, the concept of *Swadharma* is almost a key which unravels individual, social and international ideals in Indian social philosophy. According to the ancient Indian ideal of Swadharma, the aim and objective of everything is to evolve and grow according to its own inner principles. Not only in the kingdom of living beings but even in Nature everything has to follow and ought to follow its nature. Indian philosophers did not make a gulf between the facts and the ideals, human incentives and provisions, individual and social good. In Bhagwadgita while it has been pointed out that man has no power to check or to mould considerably the universal divine process, his destiny lies in becoming a conscious instrument of the same. Thus every individual, every class, every nation and humanity itself ought to follow their Swadharma without caring about the results. Vivekananda, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi, in the tradition of ancient Indian thinking, considered Swadharma as the key to the understanding of human duties in national and international fields. Be thyself and know thyself are the highest philosophical principles known in East or West. In order to be thyself, you will have to first know thyself. In the field of social philosophy Vivekanand, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi carried out the important function of letting the Indian masses know themselves. They reminded them of their great past, they condemned their present oppressed condition and they encouraged them to come out of it and to achieve the ancient glory. They were however, not revivalists since they did not ask the masses to return to the old but wanted to modify the ancient thinking according to new circumstances.

Practical Vedanta

It was due to this emphasis on change and new adjustments that we have called the metaphysical background of contemporary Indian social philosophy not Vedanta but Neo-vedanta. This has also been called practical vedanta by Vivekananda. Rabindranath called it religion of man. This was new and different from the old vedanta in its emphasis on science, rationalism, individual freedom, socialism, social reforms, emphasis on the reality of the world, not individual but cosmic salvation and more emphasis on diversity rather than on unity in social and political fields.

What is new in neo-vedanta

The contemporary Indian philosophy is rooted in the Upanishadic philosophy. But if the modern Indian philosophy is nothing but merely an elaboration of the Upanishadic teaching, then the question which would naturally crop up in everyone's mind is what is new in it and how and in what manner is it different from the ancient philosophy? What are its new characteristics which justify calling it new. For some historical reasons there was little philosophic thinking and development in India in the post-Upanishadic period. With the coming of the English and the consequent spread of the English language and Western culture, a new awakening took place in the minds of Indian people and there was revival of active interest in our ancient philosophy and culture.

Consequent upon tremendous impact of western ideas and ways of life, many Indian thinkers re-discovered the ancient Indian wisdom, which they so reinterpreted as to harmonize with new scientific knowledge and technique. In this process of re-discovery and re-adjustment they were immensely aided by the yeoman efforts of the western orientalist. Neo-Vedanta, significantly, is nothing but the ancient Upanishadic wisdom re-interpreted in the light of modern science and technology and the western ideology. The philosophy which emerges out of this healthy fusion of forces is a salubrious *via media* between extremes of spirituality and asceticism materialism and self-indulgence. This philosophy provides hope not only to the East but West also.

A fine example of the harmony of the western science and Indian spirituality is to be found in the exemplary efforts of Dr. S Radhakrishnan to blend in his thought and philosophy the full blooded western science and undiluted spirituality of the East.

Following are the reasons why we may call the philosophy of contemporary Indian thinkers neo-vedanta as distinguished from the old vedanta:

(1) *Impact of Western Philosophy.* In the thought process of the modern Indian philosophers, we can discover the influences on their minds of such western philosophies as Existentialism, Pragmatism, Empiricism, Moore and Russell and last, but not the least, of neo-Hegelian idealism as represented by the English trio of T.H. Green, B. Bosanquet and F.H. Bradley. As a matter of fact many of the contemporary Indian philosophers were educated in the western traditions and many of them had their education in the leading western universities. As a consequence, there is profound influence of western thinking and scholars like Dr. S. Radhakrishnan have freely quoted from the western sources and tried their maximum to find western parallels of crucial Indian doctrines, while philosophers like Sri Aurobindo do not refer directly to western sources. Nonetheless one can find the influence of western thought on the minds of these thinkers also. As a matter of fact Sri Aurobindo was educated in the English schools and universities from the age of 5 to 22. Therefore it can safely be assumed without the fear of contradiction that all modern Indian thinkers have been deeply influenced by the western philosophy and philosophers and that all of them show profound awareness of the value of western secular thought, its intellectual tradition, its science and technology.

(2) *Impact of Western Science.* The most crucial and outstanding fact of modern era is the tremendous, galloping and continuous progress of modern science so that we call our times an era of science. The reason for the profound influence of science on modern life is the fact that science plays great role in our daily life and that its fruits in the form of gadgetry, electricity, fertilizers etc. are changing our ways of life. Because the scientific knowledge is precise and accurate and is verifiable, that is, its laws and principles can be demonstrated, therefore it enjoys virtually the status of axiomatic truths, these cannot be ignored or by-passed by the conscientious philosophers. As most of the scientific progress has taken place in the West there appears to be a strong connection between science and western philosophy; but, as a matter of fact, science cannot be limited to any geographical boundaries. Science is universal, therefore Indian philosophy has not escaped the impact of science. An outstanding example of the influence of science on philosophy is the theory of evolution. When Darwin

established his theory of evolution, it became imperative upon the western thinkers to integrate and assimilate the facts of evolution in the body of philosophic thought. Many Indian thinkers also have presented evolutionary philosophies. Another influence of modern science is due to physical, chemical and psychological explanations of life and the creation of the world. Like their western counterparts, Indian philosophers have also taken fully into account the latest scientific developments while presenting their philosophy of the world. Thus both western and Indian philosophies are deeply influenced by science. But whereas many a western philosopher is perplexed and startled by the growing influence of science and find it a threat to religion of man, the Indian philosopher displays no such anxiety. As a matter of fact, the main concern of all Indian thought is the soul and the inner spiritual realm and he has never attached an undue importance to the physical facts. Accordingly the Indian philosophy has remained anchored to the bedrock of spirituality and the Indian thinker has maintained his spiritual penchant and insight. The main factor which has saved Indian philosopher from being overwhelmed by science is that the Indian mind has never given supreme importance to human reason but has regarded intuition as the best source of knowledge. Therefore, in spite of great impact of science, Indian philosopher has never found himself impelled to overstep and cross the limits of spirituality and embrace crass materialism. The Indian philosopher freely admits the influence of science while describing the physical world but discounts the extension of science to the field of spirituality. Therefore, the Indian scientist has not become an overlord over the philosopher and the realm of philosophy in India is free from undue instructions of science.

(3) *Realist account of the world.* In the world of today man is so beset with highly complex and intricate problems in the world that it is not possible to escape the harsh realities. No modern philosophy can wish away the facts of the world and concentrate wholly on the ethereal values. Today it is an admitted fact that the aim of philosophy is not simply to console man but to ameliorate and improve his lot, that is, modern philosophy necessarily has a reformist tinge. No philosophy can claim a hearing which dubs the world as a dream, a myth or a sojourn. Having innate practical sense, Indian philosophers regard the world a fact and not a myth. They regard the reform of the world as their primary aim. This awareness of modern need and temper is seen duly reflected in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo who has substituted Shanker's

Mayavada by his Leelavad, that is the world is a play of the Absolute Spirit. There may be some logical lacuna in Sri Aurobindo's theory of Leelavad; but there is no denying the fact that this represents the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the time.

(4) *Reformist Trend*. In the ancient Indian philosophy, Moksha or Liberation has been conceived as a release from the sufferings and miseries of mundane existence; therefore, the fundamental idea behind salvation is the betterment of the present lot of man. However, the conception of Moksha as a release from this world into some other world is not suited to the modern temper and is not in accordance with the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the time. In modern times such an aim of life would be considered to be selfish and escapist. This is the reason why Sri Aurobindo has given the conception of universal Moksha. The modern Indian thinkers consider it essential to develop the spirit of man and to make the world a vale of soul-making. With such an aim in view Rabindra Nath Tagore set up a spiritually-oriented system of education at Santiniketan and Sri Aurobindo set up his Pondicherry Ashram to promote spiritual culture. Even a monk like Vivekananda aimed at social uplift and resurgence as a precondition for the awakening of true religious spirit.

(5) *Political Consciousness*. In the contemporary Indian philosophy socio-politico-religious philosophy takes precedence over the spirituality. The life of spirit can grow only in a congenial socio-political atmosphere and, therefore, unless this is achieved, the talk of spirituality becomes vain. Most of the contemporary Indian philosophers had been born in an age when India was under foreign domination and a wave of political and social renaissance had overtaken their minds and spirits. Therefore contemporary Indian philosophers were not only philosophically active but were also keenly aware of the political and social awakening and their duties thereof. That is why M.K. Gandhi, R.N. Tagore and Sri Aurobindo were in the forefront of political struggle for national independence.

After India became independent, Plato's dream of philosopherring was realized in the form of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's ascendancy to the post of presidency. He guided the nation as India's Rashtrapati. Thus all Indian thinkers have been more or less involved in Indian politics. They made signal contribution to politics by injecting fresh and fertile ideas into Indian politics. The role of religion in politics, the concepts of non-violence, civil disobedience, trusteeship and nationalism are some of the crucial contributions of Indian thinkers to Indian politics.

(6) *The Influence of Art and Literature.* The Neo-vedantins were not mere philosophers; they also had keen interest in art and literature. Many of them made important contributions to the world of art and literature. R.N. Tagore was an eminent poet and he received Nobel prize for poetry. Similarly, Sri Aurobindo was a poet and litterateur *par excellence*. Even the prose style of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has earned him a place in English literature. The autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi is regarded as a piece of literature equal, if not better, to St. Augustine's Confessions. The literary and artistic strain in these philosophers disposed them toward humanist philosophy.

(7) *Humanism.* Humanism is the most characteristic philosophy of modern times. After centuries of philosophic thinking and meditation man has learnt that the end of all human activity is the improvement and development of man and that man is not to be sacrificed to any external power, be it God or a political and social institution. There is another reason for our concern with the man *per se*. The life today has become so complex and involved that no philosopher considers it a wisdom to shut his eyes to the besetting socio-politico-cultural life of the man. For this reason, thinkers like Gandhi, Tagore, Vivekananda and Aurobindo have concentrated their attention on social, political, educational and cultural problems of Indian society.

IDEALISTIC AND SPIRITUALISTIC TRADITIONS

Most of the contemporary Indian philosophers are idealist thinkers. Sri Aurobindo, Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, Tagore, Gandhi and Bhagwandas all interpret the world as the play and evolution of spirit. Matter, life and mind are the manifestations of the spirit in the world. Spirit is not a substance but life itself. In the words of Radhakrishnan, "It is the basis and background of our being, the universality that cannot be reduced to this or that formula."³ The search of contemporary Indian philosophers, like the ancient Indian Upanishadic thinkers, is the realization of Brahman. Brahman is the fullest expression of spirit of which the self and God are manifestations. "The work of philosophy," as Sri Aurobindo aptly puts it, "is to arrange the data given by the various means of knowledge, excluding none, and put them into a synthetic relation to one truth, the one supreme and universal reality."⁴ Similar quotations can be traced in the work of

Radhakrishnan, Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, Tagore, Gandhi and Bhagwandas. All these contemporary Indian philosophers have acclaimed ancient Vedanta philosophy as the basis of their philosophical ideas. They are neo-vedantins and the absolute idealism of Vedanta is their *locus standi*.

SPIRITUAL GOAL OF LIFE

The basic aim of Indian culture is self-realization. Its originators, the seers and mendicants, arrived at the conclusion that the primary duty of man is to know himself because that is the only way in which the truth of this world and hereafter can be known. It is for this reason that Indian seers emphasized introversion. Sri Aurobindo has rightly stated that spirituality is the key to understand Indian mind. It is this spirituality which has helped Indian culture to retain its originality in the world culture. Spirituality is one field in which Indian culture has led all the rest. The orthodox and heterodox schools of thought in Indian culture are generally imbued with spirituality. In Contemporary Indian philosophy the ultimate reality has been called Spirit. World is the evolution of Spirit. This evolution, according to Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, Bhagwandas and others, is spiral in nature, because that is the characteristic process of the spiritual dynamism. To quote Bhagwandas, "The word 'Evolution' and 'Involution' embody, with instinctive correctness, the ideas that these processes are forth and back, circling and cycling in a spiral."⁵ This spiral is the integral movement characteristic of the Spirit.

SYNTHETIC APPROACH TO RELIGION

A religious orientation has been characteristic of Indian culture since ancient times. In Indian social philosophy the concept of Dharma has been the basic idea in different fields of society. This idea explains the functions of different human beings, social institutions and associations. It is the thread which ties the Indian thought together. Some people have wrongly interpreted this religious orientation as escapism. Indian seers believed in a synthetic relation between this world and the world hereafter. Religious tolerance and synthetic approach has been characteristic of Indian religion. Aryans, the founders of Indian culture, emphasized the

assimilation of foreign elements in indigenous culture. Even the inner revolts as that of Buddhism which arose within it gradually subsided and merged into it. Hinduism, the essence of Indian culture, has accepted many different religions into its fold and has only gained by it.

This synthetic approach in Indian culture has been expressed in synthetic approach to religion found among contemporary Indian philosophers. Contemporary Indian philosophers including Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, Bhagwandas, Vivekananda, Tagore and Gandhi exhibit an integral viewpoint in their synthetic approach to religion. They have pointed out the contribution of each great religion to humanity and emphasised their fundamental unity. In the words of Rabindra Nath Tagore, "These religions differ in details and often in this moral significance, but they have a common tendency. In them men seek their own supreme value which they call divine, in some personality anthropomorphic in character."⁶ In his *Religion of Man* Tagore emphasized humanism as the core of all religions. He pointed out essential similarity in the teachings of the pioneers of all religions.

Ramakrishna has pointed out in so many words that God is one though his forms are many.⁷ He proves this contention by examples of changing colours of chameleon, the elephant and blind men and toys of sugar and clay etc. Devotees have seen the same God in different relationship. Therefore, Ramakrishna has pleaded for the removal of all hatred and differences. It is useless to distinguish among human beings on the basis of religious sects.

M.K. Gandhi has pleaded for toleration and catholicity, "I believe Hinduism to be a religion of truth but Islam and Christianity also are religions of truth. From your standpoint Christianity is true; Hinduism from my standpoint."⁸ "The essence of all religions is one; only their approaches are different."⁹ Thus, according to Gandhi, religions differ only in non-essentials while in essentials they agree, he points out to the essential unity of all religions. Just as God is one though his names are different, religion is also one in spite of its different names; because all religions have been derived from God. One can find similar ideas in the words of Sri Aurobindo and Bhagwandas, Radhakrishnan and Vivekanand. In his *Essential Unity of All Religions* Bhagwandas has summarized points of agreements of world religions. In his *Eastern Religion and Western Thought* S. Radhakrishnan searched the heart of each great religion to discover the intuitive basis from which it springs and thus finds out their unity in integral intuition.

Thus contemporary Indian philosophers emphasized harmony between various religions but not the abolition of their diversity. Like James said Sri Aurobindo, "A religion which is itself a congeries of religions and which at the same time provides each man with his own turn of inner experience, would be the most in consonance with this purpose of Nature; it would be a rich nursery of spiritual growth and flowering, a vast multiform school of soul's discipline, endeavour and self-realization."¹⁰

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

One finds a fundamental unity in Indian culture that can possibly elude if one concerns himself only with the external aspects of it. Such a man fails to find unity in diversity, the simple in the complex, the individual in the typical or common. It is, however, fallacious to think that India lacked all cultural unity in the past, and that this phenomenon is the outcome of recent events, the British rule among them. The ideal of cultural unity is not new to India, it is a concept which has been common to Indians of the past. The seers who gave birth to Indian culture were perfectly aware of the unity in India, the unity that derives from many common and uniform elements. This unity can be comprehended easily by understanding the unity that exists in various fields.

INTUITIVE METHOD IN PHILOSOPHY

While pointing out the limitations of empirical, rational and critical methods in philosophy and accepting their limited value, the contemporary Indian philosophers have utilized intuitive method in philosophy because spiritual intuition is the only method to delve deep into the recesses of Spirit. Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan and Bhagwandas have distinguished spiritual intuition from mental, vital and physical or instinctive intuition. To quote Bhagwandas, "It is the immediate cognition or rather awareness of the self, by the self, eternal self-consciousness."¹¹ According to Radhakrishnan, "The deepest things of life are known only through intuitive apprehension."¹² Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan and Bhagwandas, to mention only three of the contemporary Indian philosophers, have, however, admitted the role of reason in life and thought. As

a higher instrument of knowledge, intuition does not negate, but fulfills the lower instruments such as reason, instinct etc. Spiritual intuition also permits an integral view of life and its deeper realities. It is the integral method of integral philosophy.

INTEGRAL PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN PERSONALITY AND EDUCATION

The contemporary Indian philosophers have looked to human personality from an integral perspective to discover the inner kernel which is often missed by social sciences. They emphasized the spiritual aspect of man as an integrating principle which alone can boost his future evolution. It is because of an integral theory of human nature that Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, Tagore, Gandhi and Bhagwandas have advocated a multi-sided scheme of education including physical, moral and religious education, true to the spirit of Indian culture, in spite of incorporating latest scientific truths. "The aim and principle of a true national education," said Sri Aurobindo, "is not certainly to ignore modern truth and knowledge but to take our foundations in our own belief, our mind, our own spirit."¹³

HARMONY OF NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, Bhagwandas, Gandhi and Vivekananda have been the leaders of the rise of nationalism in India. They have relentlessly criticised and opposed foreign rule in India. They have everywhere pleaded for Swadeshi and Swadharma. Sri Aurobindo gave a crushing reply to Western attacks on Indian philosophy. Gandhi launched political movement of Swadeshi. Bhagwandas, comparing ancient Indian socialism with its modern western counterpart, pointed out the virtues of Indian system. And yet all these strongly supported internationalism and the ideal of world brotherhood. It was so because of their integral perspective of social and political philosophy in which the higher does not contradict the lower but fulfills it. To quote Radhakrishnan, "The wider patriotism does not supersede but embraces the narrower patriotism."¹⁴ Tagore, the poet of Indian nationalism, established a truly international university named Vishwa Bharati. Sri Aurobindo established an international university at Pondicherry.

MEETING OF EXTREMES

Thus contemporary Indian philosophy can be characterised by a meeting of extremes. This is because its spokesmen, including Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, Bhagwandas, Vivekanand, Gandhi and Tagore had a wide and deep knowledge of western science, art, literature and culture and a first hand contact with the West. It is hence that they could compare Eastern thought with Western and reach at an integral viewpoint. Thus one finds a meeting of idealism and realism, ancient Indian ideals and modern western principles, nationalism and internationalism, individualism and socialism in their writing. They drew their inspiration from ancient scriptures, Upanishads and Gita. They revived the ancient vedanta philosophy in modern garb. They synthesised spiritual truths with scientific discoveries. They pleaded for a meeting of Eastern and Western culture and religion. They advocated a world government and a world state, so that humanity may march in its onward progress as one solid community. They reconciled modern activities with ancient ideals of renunciation. Thus in metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, ethics, religion, education, social and political philosophy, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, Vivekanand, Gandhi, Bhagwandas and Radhakrishnan have maintained integral approach, the only proper perspective for the future speculative activity of man.

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ANNIE BESANT

Among the representative movements of Renaissance period Theosophical Society occupied an important place. It is so since it re-oriented ancient Indian philosophy of the Upanishads and the Bhagwadgita in modern language. Theosophical Society was established by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott. Annie Besant became the President of this society in 1907. Under her presidentship Theosophical Society became a real force not only in the field of philosophy and religion but also in the fields of social and political reforms in India. Annie Besant was so much influenced by Hinduism that she believed that she was a Hindu in past life. She came to India in 1893 at the age of fortysix and devoted herself to social, religious, educational and sometimes to political activities. Her political views were not very mature but she did make a mark in the field of religion and social thought. Her philosophical views were almost the same as found in Hinduism. She considered Advaita Vedanta as the intellectual bridge between Hinduism and Islam. Her views in the field of religion were similar to those of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Dayananda. She believed in all the dictums of Hinduism. She was very much impressed by the Bhagwadgita and wrote a famous commentary on it. Annie Besant believed that so far five main races and their sub-divisions have evolved in the world. She thought that in future two more root races will evolve thus bringing the total to seven. She considered Aryan race as the best and thought Central Asia as its place of origin. The following are the important socio-political ideas of Annie Besant:

1. **Liberty.** Like Ram Mohan Roy and Keshab Chandra Sen Annie Besant demanded home-rule for India. She wrote, "I demand for everyman, whatever be his opinions, that he shall be able to speak out with honest frankness the result of honest thought,

without forfeiting his rights as citizen, without destroying his social position, and without troubling his domestic peace...Liberty is immortal and eternal, and her triumph is sure, however it may be delayed...and hers is also the triumph of tomorrow if only we who adore her, if only we can (be) true to ourselves and each other. But they who love her must work for her, as well as worship her, for labour is the only prayer to Liberty, and devotion the only praise.”¹ Explaining her idea of liberty and the free men and women in a free nation she said, “You can only have a free nation when you have free men to build it out of free men and women both, but no man is free and no woman is free who is under the dominance of appetite, or vice, or drunkenness, or any form of evil which he is unable to control. Self control is the foundation on which alone freedom can be built. Without that you have anarchy, not freedom, and every increase of the present anarchy is paid for by the price of happiness, which is given in exchange.”²

2. Aristocratic Socialism. Annie Besant was against representative democracy. Like Plato she wanted to entrust the function of Government to a selected class of people. Criticising representative democracy as Majoritarianism she said, “...our ideal of Brotherhood applied to Government claims power for the wise and not for the ignorant; places law-making in the hands of those who only know the needs of the household, or perhaps the needs of the town. The people have a right to happiness, but they can never get it for themselves by physical force, by legal violence, and by competition; they must be guided to it by knowledge, by those who understand.”³ She wanted a socialism based on common agreement leading to the realization of mutually beneficial and enjoyable adjustment of capacities and functions. Condemning mass socialism she said, “A democratic socialism, controlled by votes, guided by numbers, can never succeed; a truly aristocratic socialism, controlled by duty, guided by wisdom, is the next step upwards in civilisation.”⁴

3. Spiritual Nationalism. Annie Besant started the Gospel of spiritual nationalism which was later on expressed in the writings of Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and M.K. Gandhi. In her presidential speech at the Calcutta session of Indian National Congress she said, “For, what is a Nation? It is a spark of the Divine Fire, a fragment of the Divine Life, out breathed into the world, and gathering round itself a mass of individuals, men, women and children, whom it binds together into one. Its qualities, its powers, in a word, its type, depend on the fragment of the

Divine Life embodied in it...The foreigners laid waste her cities, and discrowned her kings. They came to conquer, but they remained to be absorbed. At last, out of those mingled peoples, the Divine Artificer has welded a Nation, compact not only of her own virtue, but also of those her foes had brought to her, and gradually eliminating the vices which they had also brought."⁵

The essence of spiritual nationalism, according to Annie Besant, is religion. Religion is a revivifying force. It teaches solidarity. Pleading for the religious basis of spiritual nationalism Annie Besant said, "I feel strongly...that only on the basis of religion can a true Nationality be built up. Religion itself which gives the sense of human dignity joined to the sense of human duty, and the self-respect of India could never have arisen as it has arisen today, had not the philosophies and the religions of past re-won their empire over the Indian heart; and the virtues that the great religions typify, all of which we find in this sacred land, are virtues that we need for the building of our Nation."⁶

COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS

Annie Besant, like Mazzini, Gandhi and Aurobindo had a vision of a Commonwealth of Nations substituting the world empire. After the solidarity of each nation she considered it necessary to integrate all the nations in a world federation so that the ideal of world peace may be achieved. In her concept of universalism the individual, the society, the nation and finally the humanity form ever widening circles, each including the smaller one and each giving place to a wider circle. Explaining her idea of the next stage in human evolution after the realization of spiritual nationalism, Annie Besant pointed out, "The next stage of the plan is the building up of a free Commonwealth of Nations in which India plays her equal part. This is why the English came here and others had to go away; and the one Nation that is free in her institutions in her own island, if not free in her practice outside her own island, is the English Nation, chosen to come here and blend with the Indian Nation in the building up now of the World Empire, to be really a World Commonwealth, not a World Empire which was to rule by force but a World Federation which was to govern by love and in peace."⁷

OPPOSITION OF NON-COOPERATION

Like Rammohan Roy and Keshab Chandra Sen, Annie Besant considered British rule in India as a blessing. Therefore, she developed differences with B.G. Tilak and even with the moderate M.K. Gandhi. She was against Gandhian programme of non-cooperation for achieving Swarajya. She levelled three main charges against Gandhian non-cooperation movement. Firstly, she considered it revolutionary. Secondly, she feared that it will create hatred between the Indians and the British. Thirdly, she thought that non-cooperation may disrupt Indian social structure. Expressing her strong feelings in this connection she said, "Non-cooperation strikes at the foundation of society which is based on cooperation and can only exist through continued cooperation. It means a reversing to anarchy, a violent breaking of all the mutual ties which bind men together. It will inevitably lead to rioting and bloodshed, which can only have one result – repression and the putting off of all improvement in our civil conditions."⁸

The above discussion about the social and political ideas of Annie Besant makes it amply clear that she was one of those spiritual savants of the country who not only brought out solutions of the present problems but also looked to the future where in an integrated humanity India may fulfil a very important role. Her moderate opposition of the British and her praise for them aroused opposition of the moderates and the extremists but no one can deny that the essentials of contemporary Indian social philosophy such as spiritual nationalism, India's unique mission, and world brotherhood had their beginnings in her thoughts.

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DAYANANDA

Among the contemporary Indian philosophers Swami Dayananda may be called to be the greatest rationalist. While on the one hand he was a great supporter of Vedas and other holy texts, his approach everywhere was that of a rationalist. He never accepted anything without meditating upon its advantages and disadvantages. His magnum opus *Satyartha Prakash* is an eloquent testimony to his rationalism. Pointing out the object of this great work Dayananda wrote, "...there is not the remotest idea to hurt the feelings of any person either directly or indirectly, but on the contrary, the book proposes that men should distinguish truth from falsehood. Thus alone can the human race steadily advance on the path of happiness, since none but the practising of truth is the cause of the improvement of the human family."¹ These words express both his rationalism and humanism. It should be remembered that modern humanism is rationalism. Its sole aim is human welfare and that too on this earth here and now. As is clear by the above object of the chief work of Dayananda, like a true humanist, he aimed at the progress of humanity on the path of happiness. Thus it was in keeping with this aim that Dayananda presented his philosophy.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Dayananda is a realist, therefore his epistemology is also markedly realistic. His epistemology includes the following queries:

- (1) Knowledge is impossible without a knower, hence there is some knower.
- (2) The known exists independently of the knower otherwise what is known?

- (3) Sense organs are means of knowledge in the relationship between the knower and the known.
- (4) Analysis of the sources of knowledge.
- (5) Whether everything we know is true knowledge and if not, what is false knowledge?
- (6) What is the nature of true knowledge?

Five Tests of Knowledge

To ascertain that whatever knowledge we have received is true or not or how much truth is there in it, Dayananda gives us five kinds of tests : (1) Whatever is in consonance with the attributes, actions and nature of God and the Vedas....(2) Whatever is in accordance with the order and progress of creation.... (3) (*Apta*) all that which agrees with the preachings of virtuous, learned, truthful and veracious person,...(4) that which is in consonance with the voice of one's inner soul which is pure and one's knowledge, and (5) that which can be testified by the eight valid sources of knowledge (*Asta-pramanas*) i.e. perception (*pratyaksha*), inference (*anumana*), comparison (*upmana*), verbal knowledge (*sabda*), tradition (*Aitihya*), presumption (*arthapatti*), subsumption (*sambhava*) and non-existence (*abhava*), should be taken to be true."

Eight Pramana or Sources of Knowledge

In addition to other means of knowledge, eight sources of knowledge or pramanas are very important in the cognitive process. The eight pramanas are the following :

(1) Perception (*pratyaksha*), (2) Inference (*anumana*), (3) Comparison (*upmana*), (4) Verbal knowledge (*sabda*), (5) Tradition (*Aitihya*), (6) Presumption (*arthapatti*), (7) Subsumption (*sambhava*) and (8) Non-Existence (*abhava*). The first four i.e. perception, inference, comparison and verbal knowledge, are in accord with the four pramanas pointed out in the Nyaya Sutra of Gautama while the latter four, tradition, presumption, subsumption and non-existence are taken from Vatsyayana's commentary on Nyaya philosophy.

In his work *Vyavhar Bhanu*, Dayananda has pointed out that education is that by which man attains happiness and the good virtues of knowledge etc. and leaves evils like ignorance: knowledge is that by which a thing is known as it is and through

which one attains virtues. It is through knowledge that we can make others happy and ourselves attain happiness. On the contrary that by which things are confused and which leaves evil effects for ourself and others is ignorance. In his magnum opus *Satyartha Prakash* Dayananda has distinguished between knowledge and ignorance. To quote his words, "He who realizes the nature of Vidya – true knowledge – and of Avidya – good moral life and Divine contemplation – simultaneously conquers death by virtue of Avidya and obtains Immortality by virtue of Vidya."³

Characteristics of Ignorance

Before defining right knowledge or *Vidya* Dayananda has described the following characteristics of *Avidya* or ignorance:

1. The false notion that the transcendent world and worldly things (such as bodies) are eternal or in other words that the world of effects, that we see and feel, has always been existing and will continue to exist for ever, and that by virtue of the power of yoga the physical bodies of godly men become imperishable, is the first kind of (*Avidya*) ignorance.
2. To regard impure things, such as lustfulness and untruthfulness, as pure is the second kind of (*Avidya*) Ignorance.
3. To believe that excessive sexual indulgence is a source of happiness, whilst it really causes pain and suffering, constitutes the third variety of (*Avidya*) Ignorance.
4. To consider dead material things as possessed of soul is the fourth kind of (*Avidya*) Ignorance."⁴

Characteristics of Knowledge

Explaining *Vidya* or right knowledge in the tradition of Vedas, Dayananda has written, "This four-fold incorrect knowledge is called *Avidya* or Ignorance. The reverse of it *viz.*, to look upon what is temporal as eternal, what is eternal as temporal, what is pure as impure, what is impure as pure, pain as pleasure, pleasure as pain, what is soul-less as soul-less, what is soul-possessing as soul-possessing, is called *Vidya* or knowledge."⁵ Distinguishing between knowledge and ignorance Dayananda wrote, "That by which the true nature of things is known is called knowledge whilst that by which the true nature of things is not revealed,

and instead, a false conception of things is formed, is called Ignorance.”⁶

Thus, in pointing out the aims of knowledge, Dayananda has maintained a pragmatic and practical outlook. Though in the Vedic Tradition he considers salvation to be the aim of knowledge but this salvation is not an extra terrestrial goal. It includes the realisation of human perfection as an individual as well as a collectivity here on this earth. It is hence that Dayananda has laid so much emphasis on right knowledge and right conduct. In the second chapter of his famous book *Satyartha Prakash* he has written, “Fathers, mothers and tutors should always give their children and students good counsel and they should also advise them to imbibe their virtue but avoid their vices.”⁷

Humanism

Dayananda's philosophy of knowledge has been elaborated in the second, third, fourth and ninth chapters of *Satyartha Prakash*. Explaining the aim of the author in writing the book Dayananda said, “Though the human should possess the capacity for ascertaining truth, yet through self-interest, obstinacy, wrong-heartedness, ignorance and the like, it is led to renounce truth and incline towards untruth. We have freed ourselves from these influences while writing this book. It is not our object to hurt any one's susceptibilities or to injure anyone. On the other hand, our aim is to further the advancement and advance the well-being of mankind, to help (all) men in the ascertainment of what is right and to enable them to accept truth and reject falsehood. In our opinion there is no other way of elevating the human race.”⁸ Dayananda tries to fulfil this humanistic ideal both positively and negatively. While on the one hand he says, “Of course, any suggestions made by persons actuated with the spirit of furthering the welfare of humanity, on being found good, will be most acceptable,” on the other hand he ruthlessly criticises those who supported untruth and rejected whatever is thought to be harmful for human welfare. Taking sides due to prejudices, according to Dayananda was not only foolish and wrong but below the dignity of man. This emphasis on human dignity exhibits the humanism of Dayananda.

METAPHYSICS

God

Dayananda believes in the existence of God as entirely beyond doubt. God is the Supreme-Entity, whom no other existing entity can either rival or overwhelm. God is the creator, director and sustainer of the universe, its sole ruler. God is possessed of infinite power and infinite knowledge. He is also the agent who gives to living beings the fruits of their actions.

Proofs for the Existence of God

Materialists and the Charvaka philosophers offer the view that God cannot be known through the senses, and hence it is impossible to establish his existence through perception. Besides in the absence of perception, inferential evidence, too, is not very significant because indirect knowledge can be inferred only on the basis of perception. Undoubtedly, God cannot be perceived by the senses like physical objects, and in consequence, all scholars seek to establish God's existence through testimony (*sabda*) and inference. Dayananda advances the following proofs for the existence of God:

1. **Perception.** In opposition to the Charvaka view, Dayananda has accepted the fact of direct perception as a means to establish the existence of God. This is clear in the following dialogue:

Question. You frequently speak of God, but how do you establish His existence?

Dayananda (answer). "Through perception and other evidence." (Nyaya-Sutra 1-6). In establishing the existence of God, Dayananda says "The knowledge that arises from the contact between ears, skin, eyes, tongue, vital energy (*prana*) and mind (*mana*) with word, touch, form or vision, taste (*rasa*) smell, pleasure, pain and true and false respectively is called perception, but it should be free of error. Now we should consider that the senses and mind provide perception of qualities, but not of their possessor, for example, the four senses, skin etc. can provide knowledge of touch, vision, taste and smell and thus the possessor of these qualities the earth, can be perceived by the mind in association of soul (*atmayukta*). In the same manner, such perceptible qualities as creation and design in this universe also lead to the perception of God. When the soul directs the mind

and the mind directs the senses on any specific object, and when the soul turns to either evil acts such as theft or virtuous acts such as charity then his desire and cognition converge on it, at that time there arise in the soul the feelings of fear, doubt and shame for evil actions and courage, certitude and happiness for virtuous deeds. These emotions originate not in the jiva itself but are transmitted to it by God. When the jiva becomes pure and feels inspired to meditate about God, he achieves direct perception of both jiva and God. Dayananda argues that "since knowledge of God can be had directly, there can be no doubt about knowing Him inferentially or indirectly, since the presence of the effect naturally leads to an inference of the cause."⁹

2. Creation: Rejecting Jain theory of creation Dayananda declares that "the universe does not arise by its own nature, but through creation by God."¹⁰ The reason is that "there can be no action or a thing arising as an effect in the absence of an agent. The objects like earth, which are formed by uniting and disuniting, cannot be eternal, because that which is formed by the combination of elements, did not exist before coming into being and would not exist after destruction of combination."¹¹ His second argument is that "if the universe arises because it is in its nature, then destruction could never occur, and if destruction is also accepted as being natural to the universe, then creation could not take place. If both these attributes are posited simultaneously, then the system of creation and destruction would become impossible."¹²

This creation appears to possess certain inviolable laws which appear to be working under the direction of some intelligent being. Dayananda opines that, "the jiva does not possess the capability of creating the universe while the inert matter does not possess the capacity of becoming universe itself. This proves that it is God alone who creates this universe and remains in Bliss."¹³ According to Dayananda, God creates this world so that jivas can experience life and achieve salvation. He does not have any personal desire or purpose in creation. God creates the entire world from his will, which is not desire, but rather "that which is the perception of all knowledge and the creation of the entire universe."¹⁴ God does not use hands and feet in this act of creation, because it is illogical to attribute a body to Him. Dayananda says, "Paramatma does not have hands but by his power of hands He creates everything, he does not have feet but being inherent in everything, He is capable of movement, He does not have eyes but sees everything. He does not possess ears but He

hears everyone's conversation. He does not have a mind or internal organ but He knows the entire universe, but there is no one who can know Him. He performs through his capacities all those acts which need senses and mind."¹⁵

3. Distributor of the fruits of action: Dayananda seeks to establish the existence of God on the basis of the system of fruits of actions perceptible in the world. It is God who dispenses the fruits of actions, it is He who gives the rewards of good and bad deeds of jivas. Every action that we indulge in leaves behind its own fruit. No living being wishes to obtain sufferings, and it is seen as a tendency that no one wishes to experience pain as the retribution for his evil deeds. In such a situation, one is compelled to accept the existence of an omnipotent and supremely powerful God. If God had not existed, the jiva would not willingly have suffered pain as the reward for his sins, just as a thief does not voluntarily undergo punishment for his crime, but he undergoes it because there is a state to enforce a system of punishment. In the same way, jivas experience the fruits of their virtuous or evil deeds because there is a God to ensure this.¹⁶

4. First source of knowledge: God is the first or original source of all knowledge. Dayananda points out that, at the beginning of creation, God enlightens the human race with the knowledge of the Vedas for a successful life. Even today, no one can become learned without being taught by a teacher. And this contention is entirely tenable. In the absence of basic knowledge, one cannot comprehend the mystery of creation without an efficient and guiding knowledge. It is in this form that Yoga conceives of God as the first teacher (guru) or guide. Dayananda says "We believe that the qualities, action and nature of God are eternal, and eternals cannot suffer from the defect of being mutually interdependent." He adds, "Since Parameshwar Himself and His infinite qualities such as knowledge, are eternal, the Vedas which are a creation of God, cannot suffer from the defect of infinite regress (*anavastha dosh*)."¹⁷

Nature of God

According to Dayananda, "God is of the nature of truth, bliss and consciousness, formless, supremely powerful, just, generous, unborn, infinite, without blemish and distortion, unique (*anupama*), the basis of everything, master of all (*sarveishwar*), omnipresent, residing in all things (*sarvaantaryami*), unperishable (*ajar*); beyond

death, fearless, eternal, pure, and the creator of the universe. It is proper to worship Him and to no other." (The second commandment of Arya Samaj, laid down by Swami Dayananda).

The three words Ishwara, Paramatma and Brahman refer to the sole being who possesses the above-mentioned attributes.

The conception of God according to Swami Dayananda is apparent from the second commandment for the Arya Samaj. God is the highest entity which he also calls Brahman, Paramatma, and the Param-Purusha. In His absence the origin of creation, sustenance, destruction and the Law of Karma, are all inconceivable.

Brahman

Ishwar and Brahman are synonymous referring to the same entity. The word Brahman is derived from the root Brih. It means, "that which is omnipresent, great, infinite and supremely powerful." The word Brahman has been used to refer to the Supreme Being both in the Upanishads and the Vedas. There, too, God, being great, has been called Brahman. In the Vedas and Upanishads, the main name attributed to God is Om. The Upanishads state, "Of whom all the Vedas sing, whom all the seers elaborate upon, the desire to realize whom inspires all the seekers after salvation to adopt Brahmacharya, He, briefly stated, is Om."¹⁸

In the first chapter of his "*Satyartha Prakash*", Dayananda elaborates upon more than one hundred names ascribed to God. God is also called "Agni", or fire, because He enlightens everything. In the sense of God, being the highest entity, is called "Indra". Since he is the basis of the life of everything, he is also "*Prana*", which means life. And, since he is creator of everything, He is also called Brahman, since His attributes are infinite, His names are also innumerable.

God is the most subtle of all material entities of the world, and because of this He pervades them all. He inheres in the jiva as well as all the elements of prakrati. Being-all-pervasive, He is the most extensive (*vrahada*). It is because of His all-pervasiveness that He is also omnipresent, omniscient, the supreme creator and controller of all. If He were limited to anyone dimension or direction, He could not possibly have possessed these attributes.

Brahman is both with and without attributes. The worshipper can worship God on the basis of his natural, innate attributes,

but it is not possible to attribute to Him impossible qualities which are contrary to His very nature, and hence He can be conceived of as being without attributes.

A very common but fallacious assumption on the part of many scholars is that by the presence of attributes they ascribe form to God, while their absence implies formlessness. But formless element can also possess attributes, for instance, the sky, whose attribute is sound (*shabda*). Besides, since formlessness is itself a quality, how can such a substance be considered attributeless? God being ubiquitous is formless and Dayananda ordains that only this single formless Paramatma must be worshipped.

God is Truth, Bliss and Consciousness (Satchidananda)

According to this interpretation, God is Truth because He pervades all substances that have existence, God is consciousness because He is aware of both true and false and because He arouses the knowledge in the mind of all kind of living beings, and God is Bliss both because it is His nature and also because He is far beyond sorrows and sufferings. Besides, all jivas find bliss with Him in the state of *moksha*. Hence He is Bliss.

Paramatma is unique

God is unique because He is uncomparable (*anupama*). Nothing is either bigger than or equal to Him. Jiva and Prakrati eternally exist along with Paramatma, but both are inferior to Him. This conception does not contradict God's all-pervasiveness because God, being supremely subtle, inheres in both the jiva and prakrati.

Source of Bliss

According to Dayananda "that one, whose ignorance has disappeared by deep meditation and who has established his mind in God gets inexplicable Happiness by getting union with God. Jiva experiences this happiness in his mind or internal organ."¹⁹ Again "that worship of God leads to attachment with Him, the individual's own qualities, deeds and nature improve through contact with Him, the individual obtains fearlessness, egolessness, courage and aid. Worship of Brahman leads to direct union with God."²⁰

No Incarnations

Dayananda contends that, in the first place, there is no need for God to incarnate Himself since the Parmatma, who could create this entire universe without assuming a human form, can certainly destroy all evil forces through a simple act of will. Secondly, how can the infinite, formless, omnipresent, and omniscient God enter the uterus of a woman? Did He not already exist there, that we should presume that he enters it? God is beyond all physical bonds: then how can He assume a human body? Consequently, God does not assume human form or appear as an incarnation.

Monism

Swami Dayananda was a monist. He wrote, "You must accept only Him the creator, and none other has brought into light and existence this varied universe, who sustains and destroys it, who is the sole owner of it, in whom the creation and destruction of the universe inheres. He is Paramatma. Paramatma is to be worshipped." "Worship with love that Paramatma who has created the universe from the earth to the sun."²¹ Not only this, even the Shruti has clearly refuted the worship of various gods and goddesses in its statement: "The word 'devata' or deva is attributed to that who possesses useful and good qualities, and the earth is one such object, but nowhere is it said to be God or worthy of worship."²²

CONCEPT OF SOUL

Philosophy is based upon the concept of human nature. Dayananda has supported the concept of human nature expounded by the Vedas and the Upanishads. According to Vedic psychology it is the mind which resides in the heart and relates the body to the soul. This mind has wonderful powers. It controls the five sense organs, five motor organs, five pranas and the intellect. Without the purification of the mind no knowledge can be achieved. The mind can be controlled through Yoga.

Soul : The Essence of Human Nature

According to Vedic psychology, man is neither body nor mind nor sense organs but the soul. Following this ancient tradition,

Dayananda maintained that man is essentially a soul. Describing this soul he wrote, "Just as it is the man that uses his sword to kill another who is punished and not the sword, similarly, it is the soul that, by the use of such instruments as the body, the bodily senses, the organs of thought, and nervous forces, does acts – good or evil and consequently it is the soul alone that reaps the fruits thereof – joy or sorrow. The soul is not a witness of acts. It is the actual doer that reaps the fruits of deeds done. The One Incomparable Supreme Spirit alone is the witness. It is the soul that does acts and is, therefore, naturally engrossed by them."²³

This soul is the real cause of bondage and liberation. Explaining the means of this bondage and liberation, Dayananda has written "Obedience to the Will of God, dissociation from sin, ignorance, bad company, evil influences and bad habits, the practice of truthfulness in speech, the promotion of public good, even handed justice, righteousness and the advancement of knowledge, worship of God, glorification, prayer and communion, in other words, the practice of yoga, study and tuition or instruction of others and the advancement of knowledge by righteous efforts, the employment of best means towards the accomplishment of one's object, the regulation of one's conduct in strict accordance with the dictates of even-handed justice which is righteousness, and so on are the means of obtaining emancipation, whilst the reverse of these, disobedience to the Divine Will and the like lead to bondage."²⁴

Swami Dayananda accepts the soul, as distinct from the body, to be an eternal truth. He totally rejects the materialistic view which denies the truth of soul. Unlike the Brahnavadins he also does not treat the soul as the reflection of Brahman in ignorance.

Three Eternal Elements

According to Dayananda, "Prakrati, jiva and Paramatma are all three eternal, which means they are never born, which also means that these are the cause of the world. They themselves do not have any cause. Because of his indulgence in this eternal prakrati, the eternal jiva becomes enmeshed, while Paramatma neither experiences it nor becomes enmeshed in it."²⁵

The soul is eternal

On the basis of the Upanishadic mantras Dayananda accepts

three eternal entities, and soul is one of them. "The soul, by its very nature, is eternal. It has originated neither from the elements of nature, as the naturalists claim, nor from Brahman, as the Advaita philosophers hold."²⁶

Characteristics of the Soul

On the basis of the aphorisms of Nyaya philosophy, Dayananda points out that desire, aversion, activity, pleasure, pain, and knowledge are the characteristics of the soul. The body is inert, therefore there is no motion in it. Inert matter lacks desire, knowledge and other such attributes and hence the master of the body is the soul, and he resides in it. Nyaya philosophy treats desires, aversion etc., as the signs (*Linga*) of soul. The body possesses a conscious soul because human beings are seen to exhibit desire, aversion, effort, pleasure, pain and knowledge, while not even one of these attributes is discoverable in prakrati. Consequently these are the signs of the soul, as distinct from prakrati. The presence of these signs in a body tells us that there is a conscious soul in it which differs from the body itself. Here Nyaya thinkers make it clear that these are not the natural attributes of the corporeal body. In this case then these signs are proved to be the attributes of the soul. This, therefore, means that the soul possesses the attributes of desire, aversion, effort, etc.

The soul is limited in knowledge

The soul, by nature, is limited in knowledge. What is ignorance? This is a very complex philosophical question, which even the sophisticated thinking of Shankara could not answer. Accepting ignorance as a universal power is not beyond doubt, because power can subsist only in some powerful entity, and only God can conceivably have the capacity to possess a power that operates universally. The central error of Advaita philosophy lies in accepting maya, which is indistinguishable from ignorance, as a universal creative power. This was done to support the non-dualistic theory. On the other hand, if one rejects the principle of maya, one is faced with the question why does the eternal soul become involved in the cycle of birth and death, pain and pleasure? Swami Dayananda's answer to this is that the jiva is by its nature limited in knowledge, the soul is unlike the infinitely knowledgeable God. The very factor of being limited in knowledge, conceals

within it the fact of ignorance, and it is this ignorance which prevents jivatma or soul from realizing its own true nature and that of the Supreme Being.²⁸ And because of this jiva perceives purity in impurity, pleasure in pain, consciousness in unconsciouness and permanence in transient and thus becomes involved in the cycle of birth and death.²⁹

Soul and Body

Dayananda postulates the following relation between soul and body :

1. *Soul in body.* Residing in the body, the soul activates the body successively through the mind, intellect, consciousness and ego, which is also called four-fold internal organ. The mind, intellect and the sense organs are means to achieve worldly pleasure and finally salvation. The Upanishads also declare that, "the soul is like the charioteer in this body which is akin to a chariot, the intellect is the pilot, the mind is the reign, while the sense organs are its horses. The objects of the world constitute the chariot's path. Seers accept the soul endowed with mind and senses as the enjoyer of the world."³⁰ At the same time, the Upanishads also say that the individual who possesses an enlightened intellect as pilot and an enlightened mind as reigns, is able to obtain the highest place of Brahman.

2. *The Atomic size.* Dayananda believes that the size of the soul is that of an atom.³¹

3. *Many in number.* The fact that there is a multiplicity of bodies in the world, and also that these bodies differ from each other in their actions and experiences, gives strength to the view that separate souls inhabit separate bodies. Therefore Dayananda declares that souls are numerous.

4. *Agent.* The soul is the agent and the experiencer. Dayananda fully accepts the concept of karma or action and the fruits of actions.

5. *Free.* The soul is an independent agent of his actions, and once it arrives in the world, it is no longer a puppet in God's hands.

6. *Rebirth.* The jiva or soul is immortal, something that was never born and something that will never die. The soul after the death of the present body, assumes another body, which is determined by its deeds. Those indulging in low and vile deeds fall to the level of vegetable life, those who are mean in their

actions obtain the bodies of animals on rebirth, while gentle persons indulging in virtuous actions obtain human form.

7. *The four states of consciousness*. There are four states of consciousness: waking, dreaming, deep sleep and pure consciousness. During its existence in the body the soul experiences first three states. In the waking state, the soul does its actions through the senses and acquires knowledge of the world, while in dreaming it observes his own mental impressions. In this state sensuous activities remain suspended. In the state of deep sleep the soul is immersed in dreamless sleep, in which the activities of the senses as well as the functions of mental states are stopped. In this state the soul remains completely ignorant because of excessiveness of *tamas*, but *jiva* does not cease to exist. In deep sleep the soul establishes in causal body, which is of the form of nature and common to all living beings. Dayananda further says that there is a fourth state also and that is *turiya* or state of pure consciousness. Soul attains this state in trance or *samadhi*. In this state the soul remains in pure consciousness, completely engrossed with God.

8. *Neither free nor bound*. By its nature, the soul is neither bound nor free. And, the main reason for the soul falling into bondage is that its capacity and knowledge both are limited. Because of this, the objects of the world conceal their real nature from the soul.

On the other hand, when the soul inclines towards true knowledge, removes one by one the various effects of ignorance, and thus enlightens itself with the pure light of true knowledge, then ignorance is destroyed and the true nature of each object stands revealed to the soul. In this state, the soul moves towards God and makes constant progress along the path to salvation. Worship of God and penance take it towards truth. Thus soul becomes free and attains salvation. Therefore, the conclusion is that soul comes under bondage by ignorance and gets freedom by pure knowledge. It is neither free nor bound by nature.

Four Kinds of Bodies

Again, in the Vedic tradition, Dayananda accepts four kinds of human bodies. He has explained them as follows:

- (1) *The gross physical body* which is seen and felt.
- (2) *The subtle body* which comprises seventeen principles:
Five *nervauric* or vital principles, five principles of

sensation, and five physical principles such as *prithivi*, *apah*, *agni*, etc., in subtle form and the principles of volition and discernment. It also accompanies the soul in all its births and deaths. It is of two kinds:

- (a) Material which is derived from the fine particles or subtle matter.
 - (b) Spiritual or natural which comprises the natural powers and attributes of the soul. Both these remain with the soul in the state of emancipation, and it is through them that the soul enjoys the bliss of emancipation.
- (3) *The Causal body (Karana sharira)* which consists of the elementary matter, prakriti. It is all-pervading and therefore, common to all souls. It is through this that the soul enters into the state called sound dreamless sleep.
 - (4) *The Turiya body* is that through which the soul is absorbed in the contemplation of the all-blissful supreme Spirit in the state of samadhi (superior condition) developed by the practice of yoga and perfect concentration. The energy born of this pure body, the product of the pure influence of the superior condition, is of great service to the soul in emancipation."³²

The Mind, Intellect, Chitta and Ego are the four faculties of the inner instrument in human psychology. The function of the mind is to will and desire. It commands the motor organs in response to the information achieved through the five sense organs. Inside the external physical body there is subtle body. This subtle body cannot be observed from outside. In this subtle body there are five pranas, five sense organs, five subtle bhutas and mind and intellect. Thus there are seventy elements in this subtle body. This subtle body transmigrates. It is always with the jiva in life and the death. It is the basis of enjoyment of pleasure in liberation. Besides the external gross body and the inner subtle body there is a third type of body known as causal body. It is the causal body which is responsible for deep sleep or in other words in deep sleep the jiva resides in the causal body. This is the same for all jivas. The functions of the gross body are controlled by the subtle body. The subtle body is controlled by the impressions or sanskars. The sanskaras are the results of social and moral regulations. Inside the subtle body there are five pranas and five

sense organs. These five sense organs are in the touch, vision, taste, smell and audition. The five subtle bhutas correspond to these five sense organs. These are known as five tanmatras. The sense organs can be controlled through the mind. The three gunas – Sattva, Rajas and Tamas – influence both the body and the mind. Dayananda has accepted the techniques of eight-fold yoga expounded by Patanjali. Mind can be controlled through the eight-fold Patanjali Yoga. This again is the means to realise God. The ultimate end of human life is liberation and this liberation is the result of self-realisation. Like the author of Gita, Dayananda has emphasized synthesis of action and knowledge. Adding non-violence to the ten characteristics of Dharma, he has very much emphasized and praised Brahmacharya. Like other contemporary Indian philosophers of education, including Gandhi, Vivekananda, Aurobindo etc., Dayananda has considered Brahmacharya to be most valuable in student life. Besides Brahmacharya one should also practise non-violence, truth, non-thieving and non-covetousness.

MOKSHA OR SALVATION

“The individual who knows the nature of knowledge and ignorance both, he, by overcoming death through his virtuous deeds, attains liberation by true knowledge.”

(*Satyarth Prakash*, p. 236)

In Indian philosophy, almost every philosopher has sought for a solution to the main problem of life, i.e. sufferings. To say nothing of others, even the materialistic Charvaka philosophers preach escape from pain. The atheistic Jain and Buddhist, the six Vedic systems and the Upanishads, all preach that man should strive to escape from sufferings. Swami Dayananda is no exception to this rule. His view manifests the same spirit that pervades the Indian philosophical tradition. The main riddle of life, escape from pain and suffering, is also the major riddle in his philosophy. The following excerpt from his book in the form of a dialogue exemplifies this:

Question : What does salvation mean?

Answer : (Dayananda) The aphorism says that which involves liberation is salvation.

Question : Liberation from what?

Answer : Liberation from that which all souls strive to escape from.

Question : From what do they desire to escape?

Answer : That from which they wish to escape.

Question : From what do they wish to be liberated?

Answer : From sufferings.

Every living being in the world wishes to put an end to his miseries. No one wishes to bring sufferings upon himself, and hence every living being directs his actions towards the removal of sufferings. Sankhya philosophy declares that the prime object of man is the complete annihilation of sufferings. Experience shows that in this world, a mild effort removes some suffering for some time while intense effort removes some suffering for some longer period. Hence, if extreme efforts are made, it is possible to annihilate sufferings for ever.

Means to Salvation

In order to win freedom from the bonds of the world and to achieve salvation, Dayananda directs the path of glorification, prayer and worship of God, four-fold means (*sadhana chatusthaya*) and practice of Yoga. Glorification of God refines and improves the nature, attributes and deeds of the soul in consonance with the corresponding attributes in God. Prayer also leads to destruction of vanity, increases enthusiasm, and helps in obtaining God's grace, while by worship one gets realization of God and identification with Him. Four-fold means are, to make distinction in truth and falsehood, dispassion, six kinds of virtues (*Shat-sampat*) i.e. tranquility (*sama*), restraint (*dama*), renunciation (*uparati*), resignation (*titiksha*), concentration (*samadhi*), steadfastness of the mind (*Samadhan*), and intense desire for liberation (*Mumukshatva*). The last is practice of Yoga. By practising the yoga the sadhaka realizes the inner forces like those of mind etc. Yoga facilitates the realization of God.

About the salvation or liberation of the soul also Dayananda has supported the traditional viewpoint in which the distinction between the self and the non-self, the spirit of renunciation, the performance of six kinds of acts and perfect devotion to emancipation have been considered to be the four means of salvation. Explaining the first means of salvation Dayananda has maintained that the soul is distinct from the different states or phases, kinds of bodies or five systems. It is only after one is able

to understand this distinction that he develops a non-attached view, a prologue to all self realisation. Next, the aspirant after salvation should practise vairagya or the spirit of detachment. Then he should perform six kinds of acts known as *Shat Sampatti*. Elaborating these six kinds of acts Dayananda has written:

- “(a) *Sama* consists in restraining one’s soul and means from sin and temptation, and in always practising righteousness.
- (b) *Dama* consists in keeping the body and the senses aloof from doing evil deeds, such as adultery, and in practising self-control and living a chaste life.
- (c) *Uprati* consists in never associating oneself with the wicked.
- (d) *Titiksha* consists in becoming deaf to all worldly applause or censure, and indifferences to profit or loss, joy or sorrow and in throwing oneself heart and soul into the pursuit of the ways and means of emanicipation.
- (e) *Sharaddha* consists in having faith in the Vedas and Shastras and in the teaching of those altruistic teachers of truth who are profound scholars by virtue of having studied the above, and are men of great piety and high ideals.
- (f) *Samadhana* is the concentration of mind.”³³

Besides the performance of the above-mentioned six kinds of acts the aspirant should practise perfect devotion and unflinching love for emanicipation, besides the above admitted four subsidiary means known as *Anubandhas*. Describing these four-fold *Anubandhas* he writes:

- “(i) *Adhikari* is the worthiness to become a recepticle unto the Divine spirit.
- (ii) *Sambandha* is the thorough knowledge of the Veda and the Shashtra and of the means of emanicipation another name for seeing God – explained therein, and the realization thereof.
- (iii) *Vishayee* is making the realization of God – the subject matter of all the Shastras – as the one object of one’s life.
- (iv) *Prayojana* is the exemption from all misery and pain, and the perfect enjoyment of the great bliss of emanicipation.”³⁴

Besides the above-mentioned subsidiary means Dayananda admits four kinds of *Shravana etc.* He describes these as follows:

- “(i) *Shravana* is to listen most attentively with a calm mind to the discourse or the speech of a learned men and more so if the subject be Divine science, because it is the most abstruse and the subtlest of all the sciences.
- (ii) *Manana* is thinking over what one has heard in retirement, and in removing doubts if there be any questioning to the speaker. Questions may sometimes be asked even in the middle of a discourse if the speaker and the audience think proper.
- (iii) When all doubts are cleared after hearing a discourse and thinking over it, let the enquirer enter into the superior condition and see for himself by the help of yoga whether it is the same as he had heard and reasoned out or not. This is called *Nididhyasana*.
- (iv) *Sakhshatakarana* is the resulting correct knowledge of that nature, properties and characteristics of the desired object.”³⁵

The above-mentioned means of salvation are positive. There is however, a negative aspect as well which is constituted by the removal of five types of *kleshas* or pains. These five types of pains are : ignorance, *asmita* or confusion of soul with discernment, *Raga* or the love of pleasure, *Dvesa* or aversion to pain, *Abhinivesha* or the fear of death. Pointing out the need of both these positive and negative aspects Dayananda has written, “Let every man free himself from these five kinds of *klesha* (pain) by means of the practice of Yoga and the acquisition of spiritual knowledge, the realization of God, and enjoy the supreme bliss of emancipation.”³⁶

Apart from the above means, Dayananda has laid emphasis upon right conduct. By conduct right he means the pursuance of truth in mind, words and deeds. He opines that the basic cause of suffering is sinful action, falsehood, etc while the solid foundation of happiness is truthfulness with other virtuous activities. Dayananda does not accept any means to salvation which focuses exclusively upon external purity of the body and the performance of rituals, to the complete exclusion of purity of consciousness, and the purity of attributes, deeds and nature.

Worship as Means to Salvation

In his introduction to commentary on the Vedas, Dayananda lays great emphasis upon worship as a means to salvation. Worship of God purifies the conscience and thus it becomes capable of true knowledge. The purpose of worship is not to please God so that He may forgive us our sins, but instead that "glorification of God leads to love of God and improvement of the soul's attributes, deeds and nature. And prayer leads to freedom from pride and ego, provides courage and obtains divine help and finally worship leads to the realization of the Supreme Being." According to Dayananda, God inspires those who are the seekers of salvation, but without penance, deep meditation and virtuous deeds, the soul cannot attain salvation. Dayananda explains that "When all the complexes of ignorance binding the heart of living being are removed, when all his doubts are dispelled, and when all his evil deeds are destroyed, then Paramatma or God, who pervades the soul within and without, rests in him." This statement makes it clear that in salvation, the soul's ignorance is completely annihilated, and that the soul wins freedom from the bonds of its actions, that is, its samskaras or impressions. In this state, the soul attains to its purest state, and it is established in Brahman. Just as all other things are established in the sky, the soul is established in the most subtle and all-pervasive Brahman.

CONCEPT OF PRAKRATI

"Brahman and the jiva, both are eternal, both are alike in consciousness and such other attributes and united by the relationship of the pervader and the pervaded and existing in mutual friendship. Similar to them is the eternal first cause prakrati, which is comparable to a tree as the cause and with its branches, which are as its effects. In other words, it is the matter which gets scattered at the time of dissolution. This third eternal substance, different from the first two, is prakrati. The deeds and attributes and nature of these three are also eternal. Of the Brahman and jiva, one is the jiva which fully experiences the fruits of his vice and virtue in this world, which is similar to the tree, while the second is Brahman, which does not experience or taste these fruits and it pervades and enlightens everything from God and God from the jiva and prakrati from both of them. Each one of them is eternal."³⁷

Dayananda declares, "prakrati, jiva and Paramatma, all three are eternal, in other words, they are not born." One finds numerous ideas in the Upanishads which support Swami Dayananda's realistic theory. The Chandogya states, "O Shvetaketo! Know thou water as the cause of the earth in the form of food, fire as the cause of water and from the effect fire, know the real matter or prakrati as the cause."³⁸

"This prakrati is the first cause of the material universe. Before creation, this universe existed in prakrati in an unmanifested form. O Sama! prakrati, which is true, existed prior to creation." Upanishads also occasionally use the term 'maya'. For instance, they declare, "Know the maya as prakrati and God as the magician."³⁹ Here, the Upanishadic seer visualizes maya as prakrati, describing it as : "There is one unborn containing three colours red, black and white". He further says that "From this unborn God creates the universe, in this, there is another unborn jiva, which is found entangled in the three gunas of sattva, rajas and tamas."⁴⁰

CAUSALITY

Similar to Nyaya philosophers, Swami Dayananda accepts that there are three kinds of causes: one efficient (*nimitta*), second material (*upadan*) and third ordinary (*sadharana*). Efficient cause is that by whose action something is made and without whose action nothing can be made. Second, the material cause is that without which nothing can be made, that which suffers a change of both to create and to destroy. Third, the ordinary cause is that which is an instrument in creation. The ordinary efficient causes are of two kinds. First, the main efficient cause is God, who creates, sustains and destroys the universe out of matter, and second, the ordinary efficient cause is the jiva or soul, who, out of the substances existing in the world, creates many things. The material cause, prakrati, which is called the substance of the entire world, being inert can itself neither create or destroy anything. It can create or destroy the substances of the world with the help of some other agency. Dayananda then explains, "When an object is created, then the means used in it – power, hands, various tools, space, time, and sky – are the ordinary causes."

The Soul's Freedom of Action

Question: Is the jiva or soul independent or dependent?

Answer (Dayananda) : (the jiva is) free in its dutiful actions but dependent within the system of God. The phrase (*svatantra karta*) or independent agent is a statement found in Panini's grammar, which implies that he who is independent or autonomous is also agent.⁴¹

ETHICS

Moral postulates

According to Dayananda the moral postulates are as follows:

- (1) The jiva or soul is immortal and desire, effort and knowledge are its natural attributes.
- (2) The soul is free in respect of its actions but dependent in respect of getting their fruits.
- (3) The soul can, through its deeds, both move towards progress and emancipation or towards degradation.
- (4) The highest objective or purpose of the soul is to obtain liberation. Salvation is the supreme good as well as the realization of God.
- (5) God is the dispenser of the fruits of actions.

Ultimate End

Dayananda sees the supreme good of human life only in the attainment of Supreme Bliss which means liberation. He explains this in the following discussion:

Question : From what does the soul seek liberation?

Answer: (Dayananda) from sufferings.

Question : When liberated from sufferings what does the soul obtain and where does it live?

Answer: (Dayananda) It obtains contentment and lives in God."⁴²

The Eleven Moral Virtues⁴³

Dayananda believes in the following eleven moral virtues:

- (1) *Ahimsa or non-violence* : One should never indulge in hatred or in any desire to cause harm to any body.

- (2) *Dhrati or steadfastness* : Never abandoning righteousness or dharma, but following it with the greatest patience, irrespective of pleasure or suffering, loss or gain.
- (3) *Kshama or forgiveness* : Tolerating criticism, abuse, worship, insult, etc., and yet following righteousness or dharma.
- (4) *Dama or application* : Turning the mind away from unrighteous activity and keeping it inclined towards righteousness alone.
- (5) *Asteyama or avoidance of theft* : Never acquiring the money or property of others through injustice and unfair means by words, actions or thought.
- (6) *Shauchama or cleanliness* : Purifying the mind and soul through renunciation of aversion, attachment etc., and the body through water etc.
- (7) *Indriyanigraha or control of sensibility* : Turning the external sense organs away from unrighteous activity and inclining them towards right actions.
- (8) *Dhi or wisdom* : Constantly increasing intellectual power through true knowledge, such as study of the Vedas, control over desires, keeping good company and strictly avoiding bad company, bad habits, use of intoxicants etc.
- (9) *Vidya or learning* : Obtaining that knowledge which provides realistic knowledge of all substances, starting from earth to God.
- (10) *Satyama or truth* : Accepting the truth, speaking the truth and acting truthfully.
- (11) *Akrodha or restraint of anger* : Abandoning such traits as anger and adopting such qualities as peace and patience is called righteousness or dharma.

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Tenets of Arya Samaj

1. God is the first cause of all true knowledge and things that are known through knowlege.
2. God is existent, pure consciousness and blissful. He is formless, omnipotent, just, merciful, unborn, infinite, unmixed, without beginning, unique, basis of all, supreme,

all pervading, immanent, changeless, immortal, fearless, eternal, pure and the creator of creation. He (God) alone should be worshipped.

3. Vedas are the source of all true sciences. Therefore, study and teaching, hearing and telling of Vedas is the prime duty of all Aryans.
4. One should always be ready to accept the truth and renounce untruth.
5. One should do all actions according to righteousness (dharma), *i.e.* after proper deliberation over truth and untruth.
6. The primary object of this society is to do good to the whole world *i.e.* bodily, spiritual and social good.
7. One should behave with all beings with love, according to righteousness (dharma) and accordingly.
8. One should promote knowledge and dispel ignorance.
9. One should not remain satisfied with his own welfare only, but instead he should see his own welfare in the welfare of others.
10. All should feel under obligation to follow altruistic rulings of society, while in individual welfare all should be free.

Notes and References

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38. *Chandogya* 6-8-4
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RAMAKRISHNA PARAMHANSA

Born on 18th Feb. 1835 Ramakrishna Paramhansa influenced almost all the great men of 19th century in India. He was not at all an academic philosopher, still less a social reformer or a politician, but his great religious status and power of consciousness force influenced national leaders far and wide. In the tradition of ancient Indian philosophy and religion he preached monism. According to him reality is one though it manifests in different ways at different places. Through the help of small stories he explained to his audience that ultimately the essence of everything is the same. The ancient Indian *Mahavakyas* of *Aham Brahmasmi* and *Tatvamasī* were the main basis of his religious teachings. He, however, synthesised Advaita Vedanta with Vaishnava cult of Bhakti. On the other hand, he had equal respect for other great religions of the world including Islam, Christianity and Buddhism. He preached that the essentials of all these religions are the same and there is hardly any occasion to fight on this issue. God realisation is the aim of life and Ramakrishna could realise God not only in inner consciousness but sometimes even in his physical body. His contact so much impressed Vivekananda that the latter immediately became his disciple and toured the entire world to preach the teachings of Ramakrishna. As Socrates's ideas are known through the dialogues of Plato similarly the teachings of Ramakrishna are better known through the speeches of Vivekananda.

The chief aim of spiritual practice, according to Ramakrishna, is the realisation of God. He preached discarding desire for material prosperity and lure for women and gold. This, however, does not require escape from the wordly life but a constant meditation upon God. Ramakrishna believed that passions can be eliminated by their redirection towards God. He explained this idea by several

parables such as :

"As an unchaste woman, busily engaged in household affairs, is all the while thinking of her secret lover, even so, O thou man of the world, do thy round of worldly duties : but fix thy heart always on the Lord."

"As a wet nurse in a rich family brings up the child of her master, loving the baby as if it were her own, but knows well that she has no claim upon it; so think ye also that you are but trustees and guardians of your children whose real father is the Lord God in Heaven."

The life of Ramakrishna was a laboratory for the synthesis of great religions. He believed that all the religions of the world were true and any one may lead to salvation. He experienced that the spiritual practices in any religion were equally effective. Every religion leads to the path of salvation. He was asked how God could be both immanent and transcendent, to which he said, "Exactly as water can exist in a liquid, solid and invisible form." Again, "As water is called by different names in different languages, so different religions call God by different names Hari, Siva, Allah, Christ, etc., but all denote the same God."²

He was further asked that "if the God of every religion is the same, why is it then that the God is painted differently by different religionists?" He answered: "God is one but his aspects are different: as one master of the house is father to one, brother to another, and husband to a third, and is called by these different names by those different persons, so one God is described and called in various ways according to the particular aspect in which He appears to his particular worshippers."³ This spirit of catholicity and tolerance is the essence of the teachings of Ramakrishna and therefore of Vivekananda. Admitting his debt to Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, while delivering an address at the Shakespeare Club of Pasadena, California, on January 27, 1900 said : "Now all the ideas that I preach are only an attempt to echo his ideas. Nothing is mine originally except the wicked ones. But every word that I have ever uttered which is true and good, is simply an attempt to echo his voice."⁴

AIMS AND IDEALS OF RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

On May 5, 1897 a meeting of the disciples of Ramakrishna under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda unanimously adopted

the following aims and ideals of Ramakrishna mission :

1. The Association (Sangha) shall be known as the Ramakrishna Mission.
2. (a) This new Mission is to preach the truths which Sri Ramakrishna has, for the good of humanity, preached and demonstrated by practical application in his own life, and to help others to put these truths into practice in their lives for their temporal, mental and spiritual advancement;
- (b) to conduct the activities of the movement for the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions, knowing them all to be so many forms only of one underlying Eternal Religion.
3. Its methods of action are :
 - (a) to train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses,
 - (b) to promote and encourage arts and industries, and
 - (c) to introduce and spread among the people in general vedantic and other religious ideas in the way in which they are elucidated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.
4. It should have two branches of action :
 - (a) Indian Works Department, and
 - (b) Foreign Department.
 - (a) The activities of the Indian Department should be directed to the establishment of Mathas and Ashrams in different parts of India for the training of Sannyasins and such of the house-holders as may be willing to devote their lives to the teaching of others;
 - (b) Whereas its work in the Foreign Department should be to send trained members of the Order to countries outside India to start centres there for the preaching of Vedanta in order to bring about a close relation and better understanding between India and foreign countries.
5. The aims and the objects of the Mission being purely spiritual and humanitarian, it shall have no connection with politics.
6. Anyone who believes in the Mission of Sri Ramakrishna, or who sympathizes or is willing to cooperate with the above-mentioned aims and objects of the Association, is eligible for the membership."

Under the able presidentship of Vivekananda, Ramakrishna mission did very important work in the field of social and religious reform. Its branches were spread throughout the country and even outside India. After Vivekananda the illustrious followers of the mission such as Swami Yogananda and Swami Brahmananda carried out the work of the mission.

Notes and References

1. Majumdar, R.C. *Swami Vivekananda: A Historical Review*, General Printers and Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta 13, p. 14.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VII, p. 79

5

VIVEKANANDA

On 12th January 1863 a child was born in the house of Vishvanath Datt, resident of Gormohan Mukerjee Street in North Calcutta in Bengal, who was known to the world as Vivekananda. The child was named Narendra Nath. Ramkrishna, the teacher of Vivekananda called him by this name. Bhuvaneshwari Devi, the mother of Narendra Nath was a very intelligent and religious lady. She used to recite Ramayana and Mahabharata and performed her house-hold chorus with a calm mind. Thus like M.K. Gandhi, Vivekananda owed some of his religiosity to the influence of his mother.

The early education of Narendra Nath was given through Bengali and English. His mother used to tell him the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata. The child showed special interest in Ramayana and particularly in the character of Rama. Wherever the story of Rama was recited the child Narendra Nath used to hear it with rapt attention forgetting all childhood plays. Once he meditated in a room of his house with so much rapt attention that the door of the room had to be broken to awaken him. Thus Yogic consciousness was evident in Vivekananda from the very beginning. He used to have peculiar experiences while sleeping. In these experiences he used to feel light between the eye-brows which gradually spread throughout his body. This experience proved the spiritual power of Narendra Nath. On the other hand, the child used to commit so much childhood pranks that his mother used to say that she asked for a son to Shiva but he sent a demon to him. Narendra Nath was particularly intimate with the domestic servants.

At the age of 6 Narendra Nath started going to school. Here within a year he memorized Muktibodha. He also memorized most of the portions of Ramayana and Mahabharata. After a

year he was admitted to the educational institution of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. His teachers here were very much impressed by his intelligence and genius and used to praise him very much. Narendra Nath was not only a good student but also a good player. He possessed sound health. In Entrance class Narendra Nath had sufficient knowledge of English and Bangla literature and Indian history. His understanding was deep and memory sharp. He could follow a writer by only reading some of the lines written by him. He could understand the subject of a book by merely reading some portions of it. He passed Entrance examination in first division. After it he entered Presidency college. Here also he very much impressed his teachers. His principal W.W. Hasti used to say that he never saw a genius like Narendra Nath. Narendra Nath had a multisided genius. At the college stage he had achieved an intimate knowledge of English literature, European history, philosophy, science, art, music and medicine.

During this period Brahmo Samaj was very popular in Bengal. The leaders of Brahmo Samaj had wide influence over the Bengali youth. Narendra Nath was also influenced by Brahmo Samaj and became a member of it. This influence was particularly due to his intellectual outlook. He never agreed to admit a thing without understanding it. He was vehemently against superstitions. He was a staunch supporter of social reform. He had a keen desire to participate in the progress of his country. All these tendencies took him to Brahmo Samaj. However, gradually he became dissatisfied. Once he asked Devendranath Thakur, the greatest leader of Brahmo Samaj, "Sir, Have you seen God." He did not receive any satisfactory answer.

During this time Ramakrishna, the priest of the Kali temple of Dakshineswar had a name in Calcutta. He was a devotee of a high order and it is said that he realised Kali directly. He used to believe in the value of all the religions. He preached that all religions are essentially similar. The principal of the college of Narendra Nath told him about Ramakrishna. Narendra Nath went to Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna identified the spiritual powers of Narendra Nath at the very first sight. He exclaimed that here is an incarnation of Narayan who is born to remove the sufferings of mankind. On the other hand, Narendra Nath felt that Ramakrishna was a bit abnormal. However he asked the old question. "Sir, Have you seen God?" The reply which he received was never expected. Ramakrishna told him, "Yes, I see him just as I see you here." Narendra Nath was deeply impressed but not

completely satisfied. He continued to meet Ramakrishna more often and gradually came under his influence.

In 1884 the father of Narendra Nath passed away due to heart attack. At this time Narendra Nath was only a graduate and studying law. But now the entire financial responsibility of the family came upon his head. His relatives used to tease his family. He did not get any job. He could not repay the debts he owed to many persons. Under these hard circumstances Narendra Nath had crisis of faith. However, the adversities, sufferings and troubles subdued his ego and evoked his faith. Like Gautama, the Buddha, he experienced that everywhere there is suffering in this world. This led him to the resolve to remove sufferings of his countrymen. This also increased his faith in Ramakrishna.

Narendra Nath received his initiation in Vedanta from Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna had extraordinary yogic powers. In 1885 he gave Narendra Nath the experience of attributeless Samadhi by his mere touch and ordered him that his first duty is to fulfil the mission of Ramakrishna. Narendra Nath was the leader of the association of the young followers of Ramakrishna. This association was founded with the purpose of spirituality and welfare of humanity. As the leader of this association, called Ramakrishna Mission, Narendra Nath propagated the views of Ramakrishna everywhere. Beloor near Howrah was made the head office of Ramakrishna Mission and the centre of its activities. Narendra Nath was now known as Vivekananda. He extensively toured the country and tried to understand and solve its problems.

In 1888 Vivekananda left Calcutta alone. He went to Varanasi, Ayodhya, Lucknow, Agra, Vrindavan and Hathras. At Hathras he was accompanied by his disciple Sadanand. Both of them now toured Himalayas. In Himalayas Vivekananda had a vision of the soul of India. After a year Vivekananda again toured several places within the country including Gazipur and Varanasi. In February 1891 he went to Rajasthan, Bombay and Rameshwaram. From Rameshwaram he went to Kanyakumari. There he sat on a rock in the sea and had his realisation of the great unity of India. At present there is on this rock the world famous Vivekananda Memorial.

In 1883 Vivekananda heard that a Parliament of Religions was being organised in Chigago in USA. He decided to participate in this parliament in order to give his message to the World. He was very much pained by the poverty of India and wanted to

draw the attention of the West towards this problem. This was one of the important purpose of his visit of U.S.A. Before going to USA he went to Khatri, the king of this state was his disciple. It was this princely disciple who suggested the name of Swami Vivekananda which was adopted by Narendra Nath.

On May 31, 1893 Swami Vivekananda left Bombay for USA. In the way he went to Ceylon, Penong, Singapore, Hong Kong, Kentan and Nagasaki. Seeing the influence of Indian culture and Sanskrit language at all these places he realised the spiritual unity of Asia. He reached Chicago in mid-July. Seeing the spectacular progress of knowledge and science at U.S.A., he was highly impressed. After twelve days he reached the information office of the proposed Parliament of Religions. He was told that the parliament will be held in the first week of September and his name cannot be included in the list of delegates until it is recommended by someone in USA or elsewhere. Vivekananda sent a telegram to his friends to Madras for recommendation but got no success. However, the genius like Vivekananda hardly needed any introduction. His personality was his best certificate. While travelling in the train at Boston Swami Vivekananda met a rich lady of Messachusetts. She called him at her residence and introduced him to Professor J.H. Wright of the department of Greek studies at the Harward university. Wright was very much impressed by Vivekanand and introduced him to Dr. Bros, the chairman of the selection committee of the delegates by writing, "Here is a person who is a greater scholar than all our scholar professors added together." He insisted that Vivekananda should be admitted as the representative of Hinduism at the Parliament of religions. He also gave Vivekananda rail ticket to Chicago and a letter of recommendation of lodging and boarding. Unfortunately Vivekananda lost these papers during the journey. However, these were received by a lady G.W. Hale who contacted Vivekananda and took him to the Parliament, where he was respectfully admitted as a delegate and arrangements of his stay were made alongwith other representatives from the East.

The Parliament of religions was inaugurated on 11th September 1883 at Columbus Hall. Religious leaders of the world had gathered there to hear Swami Vivekananda in the evening of the first day. They welcomed by prolonged clapping the first words of Vivekananda, "American brothers and sisters." Leaving all formalities of the Parliament Swami Vivekananda presented

his ideas in such a direct and clear language that the Parliament was very much impressed. After it he delivered a dozen lectures in USA which made him famous in the West. New York Herald proclaimed him as the greatest person at the Parliament of Religions and wrote that after hearing him we feel that how much foolish it is to send religious missionaries to the nation of such a great scholar. During his lectures Swami Vivekananda repeatedly drew the attention of the West to the problems of India. On the invitation of Bureau he visited several places in USA and delivered lectures which had wide influence over American intelligentsia. He was offered the headship of department of Eastern philosophy at Harvard University and Sanskrit language at Columbia University which he declined saying that he was a Sanyasin.

On 7th August 1895 Swami Vivekananda left USA for England. The British newspapers compared him to Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshabchandra Sen and even Gautama the Buddha. He was welcomed by heads of various churches and he delivered several lectures in England. It is here that Miss Margaret E. Nobel, the later Sister Nivedita met his teacher Vivekananda for the first time. His lectures on Jnanayoga in London particularly became famous.

On 6th December 1895 Swami Vivekananda reached New York from England. Here he delivered lectures on Karmayoga and Bhakti yoga at the residence of Miss S.E. Waldo who later on became his disciple known as Hari Dasi. Vivekananda delivered lectures in a very informal but influential style. Gradually, the number of his American disciples increased. In February 1896 he laid the foundation of the famous Vedanta Society of New York. He also delivered lectures on Vedanta philosophy in the philosophy department of Harvard University. His lecture here on 25th March 1896 was so impressive that he was offered the chair of Eastern philosophy. Swami Vivekananda had no financial difficulty as he was receiving overwhelming cooperation from all sides.

In April 1896 Swami Vivekananda left America for England and in the month of May delivered 5 lectures per week on Vedanta. He delivered three lectures, at Royal Institute of Painters, Piccadelli. He also spoke at Princess Hall, Annie Besant lodge and other well known Clubs and Educational institutions. Max Muller invited him to his residence at Oxford and was very much influenced by him. From England Swami Vivekananda went to Switzerland on

the persuasion of some of his friends. In August 1896 he was invited by Professor Paul Deussen of Kiel University of Germany. Deussen was very much impressed by Vivekananda and accompanied him on his return journey to London. Vivekananda stayed in London for next few months and then left for India with two of his disciples Mr. and Mrs. Sevier.

When Vivekananda reached India he was given a tumultuous welcome. A meeting of the disciples of Ramakrishna was called on first May 1897 at Bagh Bazar in Calcutta at the residence of Mr. Balram Bose. Vivekananda explained the problems of the country before this gathering and pleaded for their remedies. The meeting accepted his proposals and Ramakrishna Mission was established on May 5, 1897 with the express mission of serving humanity through the service of followers of various religions. It aimed at trainee missionaries who could propagate Vedanta everywhere. The programme of the mission as entrusted to two departments, Indian and Western. Swami Vivekananda was elected president of the mission and Swami Yoganand and Swami Brahmanand were elected Vice-President and President of Calcutta Branch of the Mission respectively.

As president of Ramakrishna Mission Swami Vivekananda toured the whole of the country. He went to historical places in North India, Punjab, Kashmir and Rajasthan. Everywhere he propagated the preachings of the Mission and clarified the problems of the country asking for remedies. His ideas were a combination of Vedanta and science, East and West, ancient and modern, idealism and realism. He discussed the plan of establishment of a branch of mission at Kashmir with the King of Kashmir. On 30th March 1898 he reached Darjeeling but left for Calcutta in April to serve the people suffering from plague epidemic. The service rendered by followers of Ramakrishna Mission to the suffering people of Calcutta was a rare example. However, some members of Ramakrishna Mission did not agree with the precept of Swami Vivekananda about public service. Some of them even remarked that Vivekananda did not go to America for propagation of preachings of Ramakrishna but for his own propaganda. These and other instances shocked Swami Vivekananda.

In order to provide a centre in the Himalayas for practising Vedanta Philosophy by his disciples from East and West, Vivekananda established Advaita Ashram at Mayavati, 50 miles away from Almora on 19th March 1899. It was at this centre

that the chief organ of Ramakrishna Mission came out under the title *Prabudha Bharata*. Besides Advaita Ashram Swami Vivekananda established several other centres of public service in various parts of the country.

On 20th June 1899 Swami Vivekananda again left for West with his disciples Sister Nivedita and Swami Turiyanand. During the course of his journey he established centres at San Fransisco, Aukland and Alamada. He saw symptoms of destruction of humanity in the technological advance of the West which he discussed later on in his various lectures. He returned to Beloor in India on 24th January 1901, and went to Mayavati Ashram. He also toured other centres of the country. This herculian labour for the propagation of his preachings gradually adversely affected his physical health. He suffered from diabetes and lung diseases. Gradually his condition worsened. On the insistent of his several disciples, he stayed at Beloor for 7 months and transferred all his responsibilities to his disciples. But his keen desire to serve humanity did not allow him rest. Therefore, he went to Bodh Gaya on the insistence of Japanese Artist Okakura. From there he went to Varanasi and established a centre of Ramakrishna Mission there. All this tour adversely affected his health. He used to say, "I will not live for seeing 40." This happened. On 4th July 1902 Swami Vivekananda left for his heavenly abode at the early age of 39 years.

CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS

The problems of the time of Vivekananda were partly economic, partly social and political. Vivekananda was not a revivalist or obscurantist. He was fully aware of the various problems of his time both Indian and Western. He was particularly concerned about the low level of living of Indians, ill health, diseases, malnutrition, illiteracy, factionism, casteism, poverty etc. He was also troubled by the political problems such as slavery, collectivism, state repression etc.

1. Lack of Synthesis of East and West: Due to low economic condition, Indians had an inferiority complex wherever they met Western people. Swami Vivekananda exhorted his countrymen not to imitate West because Western civilization is too young. He tried to infuse patriotism and love for the country. He demanded that India must be understood in the background

of its spiritual achievement. "He made them see that India's culture was incomparable, being developed through thousands of years of trial and experimentation till it had attained the highest standard ever reached by humanity, and consequently possessed an unshakable stability and strength. He made them see the 'why' of every Indian custom."¹ On the other hand, he criticized those Indians who were against material advancement. He said, "We talk foolishly against material civilization. The grapes are sour."²

Thus the chief problem of attitude in his time was the lack of synthesis of East and West. Vivekananda pleaded for such a synthesis in his lectures.

2. Backwardness : Vivekananda very much realised the economic and social difficulties of the poor classes in India. They were poor, illiterate, without sufficient nutrition and suffering from various types of diseases. Decrying this situation Vivekananda asked, "Who constitutes society? The missions or you, I or a few others of the upper classes."³ He pointed out that majority is more important. He remarked, "For the luxury of a handful of the rich, let millions of men and women remain submerged in the hell of want and abysmal depth of ignorance, for if they get wealth and education, society will be upset."⁴ Thus Vivekananda pleaded for freedom and growth of all the Indian people.

3. Political Ignorance : The most important political problem of the time of Vivekananda was the complete ignorance of majority of Indian people about the political developments elsewhere. In the words of Vivekananda, "Not one of them had heard of what is meant by a socialism and anarchism."⁵ But political awakening is not possible by hungry people. Food and cloth are the first needs of life." Laying his finger on the priorities, Vivekananda said, "First make the people of the country stand on their legs, by rousing their inner power; first let them learn to have good food and clothes and plenty of enjoyment then tell them how to be free from this bounding of enjoyment."⁶

4. Low Status of Women : An important problem of the time of Vivekananda was the low social status of Indian women. He exclaimed, "It is very difficult to understand why in this country (India) so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings."⁷ He pointed out, "In the highest reality of the Parabrahman, there is no distinction of sex. We only notice this on the relative plane."⁸ He suggested,

“Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. And our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world.”⁹ Illiteracy was the main cause of the low status of women, according to Vivekananda. His disciple sister Nivedita organised women’s education in India. She established a Math for this purpose. Thus Math observed all the rules of male missionaries and provided education for character. Vivekananda even prescribed physical training to women since he pointed out, “In the present day it has become necessary for them also to learn self-defence.”¹⁰ The education of women was considered a remedy for problems concerning marriage and family. Vivekananda pointed out the evil of senseless growth of population.

5. Child Marriage : Another problem of the times of Vivekananda was child marriage. Expressing his feeling in this connection, Vivekananda said, “I have a strong hatred for child marriage... I would hate myself if I had such a diabolical custom directly or indirectly.”¹¹ Explaining this problem Vivekananda said, “Oh, how, sweet is child-marriage...Can there be anything but love between husband and wife in such a marriage, such is the whine going round nowadays...The truth is that, in this country, parents and relatives can ruthlessly sacrifice the best interests of their children and others for their own selfish ends, to save themselves by compromise to society.”¹² Education of women was suggested as one of the remedies for this state of affairs.

6. Restriction of Inter-caste marriage : During this period strict restrictions were imposed upon inter-caste marriages. Pointing out to this problem Vivekananda said, “Reform we should have in many ways; who will be so foolish as to deny it? There is, for example, a good reason for intermarriage in India, in the absence of which the race is becoming physically weaker day by day.”¹³ Vivekananda emphatically declared, “It is the inter-marriage between people of the same religion that I advocate.”¹⁴ He also pointed out the need of inter-provincial marriages. He said, “The time is yet very long in coming when marriages of that kind will be widely possible. Besides, it is not judicious now to go in for that all of sudden.”¹⁵ Referring to and condemning the evil of forbidding inter-caste marriage Vivekananda said, “Don’t you see how in our society, marriage, being restricted for several hundred of years within the same sub-divisions of each caste, has come to such a pass nowadays as virtually to mean marital alliance

between cousins and near relations; and how, for this very reason, the race is getting deteriorated physically, and consequently all sorts of diseases and other evils are finding a ready entrance into it?"¹⁶ Suggesting remedies Vivekananda said, "It is only by widening the circle of marriage that we can infuse a new and a different kind of blood into our progeny, so that they may be saved from... consequent evils."¹⁷

7. Low Status of Backward Classes : Besides the low status of women, the Indian society during Vivekananda's period suffered with the evil of low status of the poor and down-trodden masses. Pointing out their disabilities Vivekananda said, "They have no chance, no escape, no way to climb up... They sink lower every day; they feel the blows showered upon them by a cruel society and they do not know whence the blow comes. They have forgotten that they too are men."¹⁸ Pointing out their importance in social fabric, Vivekananda said, "Whether the leadership of society be in the hands of those who monopolize learning or wield the power of riches or arms, the source of its power is always the subject masses. They are the backbone of the country, because they produce all wealth and food. They will certainly want the satisfaction of their material needs, less work, no oppression, no war, more food. The present system of distribution of wealth makes the poor poorer and the rich richer."¹⁹ Vivekananda warned the rich and high caste people that the down-trodden will no more tolerate exploitation. He said, "Very soon they will get above you in position... You have so long oppressed these forebearing masses: now is the time for their retribution."²⁰ He pointed out, "The lower classes are gradually awakening to this fact making a united front. Masses of Europe and America have been the first to awaken and have already begun the fight. Signs of this awakening have shown themselves in India, too, as is evident from the number of strikes among the lower classes now-a-days. The upper classes will no longer be able to repress the lower, try they ever so much."²¹ According to the historical insight of Vivekananda, the down-trodden class will give rise to many great men so that the backward may come up.

8. Poverty : The most important social problem according to Vivekananda, however, was the utter poverty of Indian masses. While touring the Western countries he compared their standard of living with the standard of living of Indian masses and felt that life in India was generally sub-human. He realised that no spiritual uplift is possible without first solving the problem of

poverty. He asked, "In all India, there are, say, a hundred thousand really spiritual men and women, who for the spiritualization of these three hundred millions be sunk in savagery and starvation?"²² He pointed out, "Empty stomach and religion go ill together. It was mockery to offer religion to a starving man."²³

9. Crisis of Character : But the basic cause behind poverty, according to Swami Vivekananda, was not economic as it was for Karl Marx, but moral. Most of the problems, according to him, show the crisis of character. It is hence that his education aimed at man-making or character building. Holding the rich people responsible for the poverty of the masses Vivekananda said, "You, the upper classes of India, do you think you are alive? It is among those whom your ancestors despised as 'walking carrion', that the little of vitality there is still in India is to be found; and it is you who are the real 'walking corpses'...You merge yourselves in the void and disappear, and let 'New India' arise in your place. Let her arise out of the peasant's cottage, grasping the plough... Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts, and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests from hills and mountains."²⁴ Like Karl Marx Vivekananda realised that the backbone of the nation is not the rich class but the so called down-trodden people. Pointing out their importance he said, "The Indian social order is but the reflex of the infinite Universal Motherhood... the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler; the sweeper are its flesh and blood."²⁵ On the other hand, "Rich men... are merely the ornaments, the decorations of the country. It is the millions of poor lower class people who are its life."²⁶ Therefore, Vivekananda concluded, "The only hope of India is from the masses. The upper classes are physically and morally dead."²⁷ These words are no less prophetic than that of Karl Marx. Vivekananda was the Karl Marx of India, the vedantin version of the great Western revolutionary. He sounded the death-knell of capitalism in India on the basis of his practical Vedanta. He exhorted the leaders to rebuild Indian society upon the ancient principle of Swadharma, allotting each person a social role according to his capacities. He said, "If the Brahmin has more aptitude for learning on the ground of heredity than the Pariah, spend no more money on the Brahmin's education; but spend all on the Pariah. Give to the weak, for there all the gift is needed...Our poor people, these down-trodden masses of India, therefore, require to hear and to know what they really

are."²⁷ Thus Vivekananda sought to build up a new social order in India, real socialism, real democracy, a society free from exploitation. His motto was elevation of the masses without hindering their religion. It is here that he differs from Karl Marx. His solution of social evils was basically spiritual and not material. He asked, "Can you give them (the masses) their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature."²⁸ This phenomena of the rise of down-trodden, according to Vivekananda, was universal. By his wide tour of the West, Vivekananda developed cosmopolitan vision of the rise of humanity. In spite of being a staunch nationalist he was equally a humanist and internationalist. He solved the Indian problems in a wider perspective involving the problems of total humanity. As he said, "The rising of the Shudras will take place first in Russia, and then in China, India will rise next and will play a vital role in shaping the future world."²⁹ He also professed, "Europe, the centre of the manifestation of material energy, will crumble into dust within fifteen years, if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground and make spirituality the basis of her life."³⁰ Thus, while admitting with Karl Marx the ideal of creation of a society without exploitation, Vivekananda did not agree with Karl Marx concerning the means of revolution. Marxist concept of class struggle and expropriation of expropriators was, according to Vivekananda, a levelling down of the moral fabric of the society. He, on the other hand, sought to raise the moral level of society, "not by bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher."³¹ This makes for the fundamental difference between Indian and Western thinking on moral issues. This again makes for the distinction of Indian brand of socialism which Vivekananda used to preach.

METAPHYSICS

Metaphysics of Vivekananda is based upon the philosophy of Vedanta. According to Vedanta philosophy Brahman is the ultimate reality, the world is a *Maya* and the ultimate end of the jiva is to attain salvation by being one with Ishwar or Brahman. The Vedanta philosophy is expressed through the *Mahavakyas* – *Aham Brahma Asmi*, *Tat Twam Asi*, *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* etc. These Mahavakyas form the basis of the message of Vivekananda.

The Ultimate Reality

The central idea in the philosophy of Vivekananda, as it is in that of the vedanta, is the Brahman, the Sacchidanand. Expressing his Central teaching about the ultimate reality Vivekananda said, "In the Advaita philosophy the whole universe is one in the self which is called 'Brahman'. That self when it appears behind this little universe, the body, is the soul ... Universal self which is beyond the universal modification of 'Prakriti' is what is called 'Isvara', the Supreme Ruler, God."³² 'Isvara' alone is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world and its destiny. "But, the Vedantic Brahman accepted by Vivekananda is neither the concrete Absolute of Hegel nor the 'Sunya' of the Madhyamikas nor the 'Alayavijnana' of the Yogacaras. It resembles to some extent the 'Tathata' of Asvaghosa but the difference is that the latter (Asvaghosa) is not very emphatic on the mystical perception of the 'Tathata'."³³ Drawing the social implications of this metaphysical idea Vivekananda said, "Thus there is a great opening for the Vedanta to do beneficial work both here and elsewhere. This wonderful idea of the sameness and omnipresence of the Supreme Soul has to be preached for the amelioration and elevation of the human race, here and elsewhere. Wherever there is evil and wherever there is ignorance and want of knowledge, I have found out by experience that all evil comes, as our scripture says, relying upon differences, and that all good comes from faith in equality, in the underlying sameness and oneness of things. This is the great Vedantic ideal...I base my teachings on the great Vedantic truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the Soul of the Universe."³⁴ Vivekananda maintained that there is a harmony between the concepts of Vedanta and Science. Brahman is the Absolute, Ishwar is primal creative energy, Prana is force and Akash is the matter.

The absolute of metaphysics is the God of religion. From the religious point of view, Brahman has been called Isvara. Jiva is the Atman in material and mental bondage. This bondage is due to karma which determines the birth.

Maya

Though Vivekananda called his philosophy practical Vedanta yet he accepted the philosophy of Maya. His position here is far from being consistent as on the one hand he accepts the word as Maya in the terms of Advaita while on the other hand he

equally emphasizes the role of karma and activity in the world. Like his predecessors of Advaita Vedanta he admits, "The very question why the Infinite became the finite is an impossible one, for it is self-contradictory. This is far from being an explanation of the world." Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, has very well explained the world by the concept of Lila and condemned the concept of Maya.

Immortality

The concept of immortality is the postulate of the ideal of freedom, since if man is immortal by nature his goal of life is freedom. The freedom in the ultimate sense, is liberation. Man, according to Indian philosophy, is not subservient to anything, the state, the community, the economic factors, even his body and intellect. Delivering his famous lecture to Americans Vivekananda called them, "children of immortal bliss." Explaining the implication of the immortality of man he further said, "Children of immortal bliss – what a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name – heirs of immortal bliss – yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal Bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth – sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions! and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter."³⁵ This is the spiritual psychology, the basis of spiritual axiology supported by all the contemporary Indian philosophers. This again is the spiritual, political and social philosophy advocated by them. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "The individual does not owe his ultimate allegiance either to the state which is a machine or to the community which is a part of life and not the whole of life: his allegiance must be to the truth, the self, the spirit, the divine which is in him and in all; not to subordinate or lose himself in the mass, but to find and express that truth of being in himself, and help the community and humanity in its seeking for its own truth and fulness of being must be his real object of existence."³⁶

The nature of immortality, according to Indian philosophy, is an ontological truth. It is a law of nature and a law of Divine. It is the inner principle of evolution. It is the meaning of the cycle of transmigration. It is the secret of human existence. In

the words of Vivekananda, "The whole of nature is that book which the soul is reading. Each life, as it were, is one page of that book; and that read, it is turned over, and so on and on, until the whole of the book is finished, and the soul becomes perfect, having got all the experiences of nature, yet at the same time it never moved, nor came nor went; it was only gathering experiences."³⁷ The entire cycle of birth and rebirth is meant to give the self various types of experiences so that it may understand its real nature and become free. As for the ancient Vedanta so for Vivekananda, "The soul is the unchangeable One, the immortal, the pure, the ever-blessed One."³⁸ This immortality, as is clear to everyone in this life, is not the nature of mundane life. The fact of that is too potent to be contradicted by anyone. There is however no place for despair, since the journey of self lies beyond mundane life. As Vivekananda pointed out, "Immortal life is contradiction in terms, for life, being a compound, cannot be immortal. True Being is undifferentiated and eternal."³⁹

Immortality and Freedom

The concepts of freedom and immortality are interdependent. Not only freedom follows from immortality but immortality also follows freedom. Man's immortality is a direct corollary of his essential freedom. The drama of the present life is not the last act in the journey of man. He had a prehuman past and has a post-human future. The process of evolution is not linear but spiral but the process goes on till the self achieved freedom. Explaining the close connection between freedom and immortality Vivekananda said, "Freedom is inseparably connected with immortality. To be free one must be above the laws of nature. Law exists so long as we are ignorant. When knowledge comes, then we find that law is nothing but freedom in ourselves. The will can never be free, because it is the slave of cause and effect. But the "I" behind the will is free; and this is the Self. "I am free" – that is the basis on which to build and live. And freedom means immortality."⁴⁰

The Concept of Freedom

The western philosophers have failed to understand the self due to their limitation to the rational method. Agnosticism in metaphysics is the logical conclusion of rational psychology and rational metaphysics. The final verdict in this field has been

rightly given by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Indian philosophy however, considers realisation as a method above reason. To know is to be. Realisation succeeds where reason fails. Therefore, while appreciating Kant's agnosticism in rational philosophy, Vivekananda does not accept it as man's destiny. To quote his words, "Kant has proved beyond all doubt that we cannot penetrate beyond the tremendous dead wall called reason. But that is the very first idea upon which all Indian thought takes its stand, and dares to seek and succeed in finding something higher than reason, where alone the explanation of the present state is to be found."⁴¹ Agnosticism logically leads to scepticism. In spite of Kant's Herculean efforts to answer Hume, the destiny of philosophy, as Hume predicted, remains undefended. If reason is the only method, philosophy is bound to end in contradictions. For Indians, however, philosophy is not a rational knowledge. The search of *Darshan* is nothing less than complete realisation. If philosophy fails to satisfy man the only alternative is *Darshan*. Vivekananda rightly pointed out, "If a man is agnostic of everything but money, fame and name, he is only a fraud."⁴² And man is not a fraud nor is he destined to an evolutionary failure. Since the ancient Vedanta to this day Indian philosophers have been always optimistic about the spiritual destiny of man and humanity. Whatever may be the gloomy prediction of the contemporary Western futurist thinkers, Indian philosophers have firmly believed that man will overcome the present rational *impasse*. This dogmatic optimism is based upon the realisation that where reason fails, intuition helps. According to the Indian philosophers self cannot be known by senses, the intellect or the reason, but it can be known through direct identity. If the reality of self is not accepted, Vivekananda asks, "Why are we going through this circle all the time, what reason can explain the world."⁴³ Secondly, "What reason is there," asks Vivekananda, "to believe in the testimony of the senses? If reason is all in all it leaves us no place to stand on this side of nihilism."⁴⁴

The Concept of Self

Reminding the ancient Indian psychology Vivekananda points out the real meaning of self as beyond the mind and beyond the intellect. Western psychology has stuck to the ancient western definition of man as the rational animal. Most of the psychologists have explored the various levels of this animal consciousness. Most of the behaviourists have been confined to the observation

of the behaviour of the animal man. No wonder that principles derived from experiments upon animals have been directly applied to human beings. Researches in the field of reason have been generally confined to mental processes. To the Indian mind, however, man is finite-infinite. The self is Brahman. He is an expression of the Infinite in the human body. This insight into human nature has been more supported by western religion than western psychology. It has been the fundamental principle of all mysticism, eastern and western. As a spokesman of the wisdom of East, Vivekananda pointed out, "Man's free agency is not of the mind, for that is bound. There is no freedom there. Man is not mind, he is soul. The soul is ever free, boundless, and eternal. Herein is man's freedom, in the soul. The soul is always free but the mind indentifying itself with its own ephemeral waves, loses sight of the soul and becomes lost in the maze of time, space and causation – Maya."⁴⁵

Indian psychology maintains that human mind is the cause of all bondage. It does not seek to make a man normal animal. It rather aims at his evolution to the supra-rational, supramental level. The ontological basis of Indian psychology is the principle of freedom. In the words of Vivekananda, "Man's free agency is established in the soul, and the soul, realising itself to be free, is always asserting the fact in spite of the mind's bondage: I am free, I am what I am. This is our freedom."⁴⁶ It is hence that Moksha has been declared to be the goal of life. Moksha literally means deliverance. Thus it is deliverance from all types of pains, worldly as well as other-worldly. It is a state devoid of all sufferings. It is pure bliss. It is deliverance from the cycle of rebirth. It is the achievement of other-worldly welfare. It is the unity of the Atman with Brahman. It is the absolute aim. It is the highest value. It is the realisation of ultimate Reality. Indian philosophy maintains a harmony in metaphysics, epistemology and axiology. All these aim at the same reality which is Atman in man, Brahman in cosmos and Liberation as Value. While all other aims are relative, moksha is the ultimate end. It is the status of identity between Atman and Brahman. This mystic realisation has been explained in Mahavakyas of the Upanishads such as *Tattvamasi*, *Aham Brahmasmi* etc. The microcosm and macrocosm have the same one underlying reality. Forgetfulness of this truth is ignorance. Ignorance is the cause of bondage. Bondage leads to pains and sufferings. Liberation from this depends upon the realization of the original truth of the identity of Atman and Brahman.

Vivekananda rightly pointed out, "The goal of the soul among all the different sects in India seems to be the same. There is one idea with all, and that is liberation. Man is infinite, and this limitation in which he exists now is not his nature. But through these limitations he is struggling upward and forward until he reaches the infinite, the unlimited, his birthright, his nature."⁴⁷ The axiological ideal of liberation has been supported by evolutionary argument advanced by several contemporary Indian philosophers. According to them evolution is the key to understand the purpose of individual and cosmic nature. The evolutionary nîsus determines both the individual and the collectivity. Contemporary Indian philosophers synthesize ancient Vedanta with science in their neo-vedanta philosophy. Ours is an age of science. Modern man cannot accept any theory which contradicts scientific findings. The principle of evolution has been accepted by the modern man. Utilising this principle to support the validity of the ideal of liberation Sri Aurobindo said, "If there is an evolution in material nature and if it is an evolution of being with consciousness and life as its two key-terms and powers, this fullness of being, fullness of consciousness, fullness of life must be the goal of development towards which we are tending and which will manifest at an early or later stage of our destiny."⁴⁸ Presenting the same argument in different words, Vivekananda pointed out, "It has gone beyond all law, beyond all limitation, beyond all nature. Nature has come under the control of the soul, not the soul under the control of nature, as it thinks it is now. That is the one goal that the soul has : and all the succeeding steps through which it is manifesting, all the successive experiences through which it is passing in order to attain to that goal of freedom are represented as its births. The soul is, as it were, taking up a lower body and trying to express itself through that. It finds that to be insufficient, throws it aside, and a higher one is taken up. Through that it struggles to express itself. That also is found to be insufficient, is rejected, and a higher one comes; so on and on until a body is found through which the soul manifests its highest aspirations. Then the soul becomes free."⁴⁹

The most prevalent view in Indian thinking is that moksha may be achieved while living. Nyaya Vaisheshika and Samkhya philosophers, consider moksha as possible only after death. This view, however, has not been accepted by the majority of Indian thinkers. Besides the distinction between liberation while living and liberation after death, there has been a distinction between

individual and collective liberation. While the traditional Indian philosophy normally believes in Individual liberation, the Neo-Vedanta philosophers including Vivekananda, M.K. Gandhi, R.N. Tagore, and Sri Aurobindo insist upon the necessity and possibility of collective liberation.

Concept of Liberation

Liberation is identity with God, the infinite. In the words of Vivekananda, "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one, or more, or all of these – and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details."⁵⁰ Elsewhere he puts it more clearly when he says, "Hear ye children of Immortality, Hear ye Devas who live in higher spheres, I have found out a ray beyond all darkness, beyond all doubt. I have found the Ancient One. The way to this is contained in the Upanishads. On earth we die. In heaven we die. In the highest heaven we die. It is only when we reach God that we attain life and become immortal."⁵¹ This God, according to Upanishads, is not extra terrestrial. He interpenetrates the universe. He is human and in everything. Thus it is clear that Moksha cannot be called an individualistic or extra-terrestrial goal. Sri Aurobindo, particularly, has interpreted it in the light of the consciousness of the modern man. Even the most recent exponents of Indian Yoga such as Rajneesh, Mahesha and others have given an interpretation of Moksha which is acceptable even to the Western men and women. The popularity which Yoga is receiving these days in the West shows that in it Indian culture has offered something which is valuable in all times and climes.

In the end liberation can be best defined as freedom. In the words of Vivekananda, "The idea of freedom is the only true idea of salvation – freedom from everything, the senses, whether of pleasure or pain, from good as well as evil."⁵²

Liberation, according to Vivekananda, can be achieved by all the three traditional paths of Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. In his own circumstances, however, Karma Yoga was the best way to realise liberation. Explaining liberation through Karma Yoga he said, "But the life of God is infinite. Who can live a moment, breathe a moment, if this all powerful One does not will it? He is the ever active Providence. All power is His and

within His command. Through His command the winds blow, the sun shines, the earth lives, and death stalks upon the earth. He is the all in all; He is all and in all. We can only worship Him. Give up all fruits of work; do good for its own sake; then alone will come perfect non-attachment. The bonds of the heart will thus break, and we shall reap perfect freedom. This freedom is indeed the goal of Karma-Yoga."⁵³ Those who think that Indian philosophy does not find a suitable place for ethics forget that Indian philosophers considered ethics as a part of spiritual goal. Ethics in India did not stop only at the rational limit, it transcended to supra-rational, the spiritual. Thus freedom is both an ontological as well as moral ideal. As Vivekananda rightly pointed out, "The greatest goodness is the highest freedom. Our aim should be to allow the individual to move towards this freedom."⁵⁴

Freedom is best expressed in the freedom of will since on the terrestrial plane, freedom of will is the expression of essential freedom. Clarifying the concept of freedom of will Vivekananda said, "Freedom of the will – it is as you feel you are here to act. But this freedom is a species of necessity. There is one infinite link before, after and between the thought and the action, but the latter takes the name of freedom – like a bird flitting through a bright room. We feel the freedom and feel that it has no other cause. We cannot go beyond consciousness, therefore we feel we are free. We can trace it no further than consciousness. God alone feels the real freedom. Mahapurushas (saints) feel themselves identified with God; hence they also feel the real freedom."⁵⁵

Among the systems of Indian philosophy liberation has been interpreted both positively and negatively. But the most significant interpretation of liberation is neutral. Neutral interpretation may be found in Samkhya and Yoga philosophy. According to Samkhya Moksha means complete elimination from the three types of pains and a status of absolute detachment of the self. Yoga aimed at the attainment of a consciousness absolutely detached and free from all impulses. The tradition of Yoga started in the Vedas and it has been constantly developed and practised by Indian philosophers to our own time. It has been the most significant contribution of Indian culture to the world. It gives what is known as liberation while living, which has been accepted as possible, not only by the orthodox schools of Indian philosophy but also by heterodox schools of philosophy – the Jainism and Buddhism. Explaining this ideal Vivekananda said, "Thus we realise that all these phenomena are but the reflections, bifurcated or manifolded

of the One existence. Truth-bliss-unity-my real Self and the reality of everything else. Then and then only is it possible to do good without evil, for such a soul has known and got the control of the material of which both good and evil are manufactured, and he alone can manifest one or the other as he likes, and we know he manifests only good. This is the Jivan-mukta – the living free – the goal of the Vedanta as of all other philosophies.”⁵⁶

Spirituality

This is the spiritual life, the whole, of which moral life is the part. The nature of this spirituality has been explained by Sri Aurobindo in these words, “Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self and soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be That, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits our own being also, to be in communion with It and union with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new nature.”⁵⁷ Thus, spirituality is a dynamis of a higher luminous and infinite consciousness. It is the breaking of the lid, the tearing of covering or the opening of a door to Divine, which alone can fulfil the end sought by all science, ethics, religion and philosophy. It is truly realised in yoga. According to Upanishads, ignorance is the cause of bondage and liberation is the result of knowledge. In the ignorance there is no distinction of the eternal and ephemeral. In it there is dualism, egoism and plurality. It is the intellectual knowledge having the distinction of the subject and object. Liberation is the freedom from such a knowledge which is in fact ignorance. Liberation, according to Indian thinking, is not rational but a suprarational status. This suprarational status determines the *summum bonum* in ethics as well. According to Vivekananda, morality is not an end in itself; mukti is its end, it is only a means for the achievement of liberation. From Vedas to Sri Aurobindo, Indian thinkers have always considered moksha as the aim of life. It is however, wrong to consider liberation as the sole ideal of human life. Indian thinkers aimed at a four-fold scheme of values in which each was valuable. Moksha was the last but not the only value. In the realisation of other values however, man ultimately aims at the final value liberation. As Vivekananda, puts it, “There is unconscious struggle of the human with the spiritual, of the

lower with the higher mind... to preserve one's 'individuality'... we are born rebels... No law for us. As long as we obey the laws we are like machines, and on goes the universe, and we cannot break it.. Freedom is the song of the soul."⁵⁸ The same idea has been differently expressed when Vivekananda says, "With every movement, man asserts his freedom... From highest thinker to the most ignorant man, everyone knows that he is free... (but) his will is as rigorously bound by the laws of causation as the growth of any little plant or the falling of a stone. and, yet, through all this bondage runs the indestructible idea of freedom."⁵⁹

Real Freedom

Explaining the importance of freedom and its variety Vivekananda said, "Freedom is the one goal of all nature, sentient or insentient and consciously or unconsciously, everything is struggling towards that goal. The freedom which the saint seeks is very different from that which the robber seeks. The freedom loved by the saint leads him to the enjoyment of infinite, unspeakable bliss, while that on which the robber has set his heart only forges other bonds for his soul."⁶⁰ Thus freedom to enjoy the objects of senses is not the real freedom. Defining real freedom, Vivekananda said, "Blessedness, eternal peace arising from perfect freedom, is the highest concept of religion, underlying all the ideas of God in Vedanta, absolutely free Existence, not bound by anything, no change, no nature, nothing that can produce a change in Him. This same freedom is in you and in me and is the only real freedom."⁶¹

Indian philosophy has interpreted everything in terms of spirituality. Hence everybody has been enjoined to follow Dharma. Freedom has also been interpreted in the spiritual sense. It is not absence of restraint or self control or the liberty to do whatever one likes. It requires renunciation and not indulgence. As Vivekananda points out, "He is free, he is great, who turns his back upon the world, who has renounced everything, who has controlled his passion, and who thirsts for peace. One may gain political and social independence, but if he is a slave to his passions and desires, he cannot feel the pure joy of real freedom."⁶² Vivekananda is against any slavery to mechanical civilization. Man, according to him, as according to ancient Vedanta, is essentially spiritual. Therefore instead of subordinating ourselves to material commodities, we should seek freedom from matter.

It is so since the self is free from material laws. Vivekananda is against man's subordination to the nature. Man, on the other hand, should conquer physical nature. As Vivekananda puts it, "The goal of each soul is freedom, mastery-freedom from the slavery of matter and thought, mastery of external and internal nature."⁶³ This is not only the goal of the individual but also the collectivity. Both the self and the Nature aspire after it. To quote Vivekananda, "Consciously or unconsciously the whole universe is going towards that goal."⁶⁴ "... Our earth is trying to fly away from the sun, and the moon from the earth. Everything has a tendency to infinite dispersion."⁶⁵

Thus the concept of freedom in the philosophy of Vivekananda synthesises materialism and idealism. Man has a body which is governed by natural laws. Real freedom is not possible for the body. Whoever is born he must die. But his death is the characteristic of the body. The self is neither bound nor subject to death. It is free as well as immortal. Thus man is a combination of both bondage and freedom. The individual is "free and not free at the same time: never free on the earthly plane, but ever free on the spiritual."⁶⁶ Freedom is characteristic to man. Nature becomes self-conscious in man. Therefore man aspires to be free from nature. Vivekananda regarded man as "the highest being in creation because he alone attains to freedom."⁶⁷ Man is not a sinner. While Christianity makes too much of evil in the life of man, Hinduism insists upon bliss as the essence of life. Vivekananda does not agree with the deterministic explanations of human nature. He rejects the Marxist economic determinism in the individual as well as collective life. All determinism is foreign to human nature. In the words of Vivekananda, "Now, on one hand, this denial of freedom as an illusion is no explanation: on the other hand, why not say that the idea of necessity or bondage or causation is an illusion of the ignorant... Therefore, the only way left to us is to admit that the body is not free, neither is the will but that there must be something beyond both the mind and body which is free."⁶⁸

Freedom is beyond both the subject and object. Indian philosophy aims at an ideal beyond both good and evil. As Vivekananda points out, "A golden chain is as much a chain as an iron one. There is a thorn in my finger, and I use another to take the first one out; and when I have taken it out, I throw both of them aside. I have no necessity for keeping the second thorn,

because both are thorns after all." Thus Vivekananda emphasises that "the ultimate freedom means freedom from both good and evil tendencies."⁶⁹ Freedom from good and evil requires making spirituality as the basis of life. Ignorance is not bliss. It is rather bondage and death. Indian philosophers have always considered ignorance to be bondage. Misery is also a form of ignorance. As against the Buddhist doctrine that everything is misery, Hindu philosophers maintained Ananda (bliss) as the essence of life. As Vivekananda points out, "Life is of very little value, if it is a life in the dark groping through ignorance and misery."⁷⁰ "Ignorance is the mother of all the evil and all the misery we see."⁷¹ This ignorance can be removed by spiritual knowledge or rather spiritual realisation. Therefore Vivekananda said, "We may convert every house in the country into a charity asylum, we may fill the land with hospitals, but the misery of man will still continue to exist until man's character changes."⁷² He further writes, "If a man's wants can be removed for an hour, it is helping him indeed; if his wants can be removed for a year, it will be more help to him; but if his wants can be removed for ever, it is surely the greatest help that can be given to him; spiritual knowledge is the only thing that can destroy our miseries forever; any other knowledge satisfies wants only for a time."⁷³

Freedom and equality

Freedom is linked with equality. Laying emphasis upon the value of equality Vivekananda points out, "I have found out by experience that all evil comes, as our scripture says, relying upon differences, and that all good comes from faith in equality, in the underlying sameness and oneness of things. This is the great Vedantic ideal... I base my teachings on the great Vedantic truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the soul of the Universe."⁷⁴ Freedom is meaningless without equality. Equality, on the other hand, is not equality of endowment but equality of opportunity. In this sense equality is the "way to freedom; inequality, the way to bondage. No man and no nation can attempt to gain physical freedom without physical equality, nor mental freedom without mental equality."⁷⁵

The Method to Achieve Freedom

Contemporary Indian philosophers agree with the ancient Indian thinking that Yoga is the best way to achieve liberation.

This yoga however, is neither raja yoga nor karma yoga or Bhakti yoga alone. It is a synthesis of the three. Agreeing with Bhagwadgita that yoga is essentially a balance in body and mind, Vivekananda says, "A Yogi must avoid the two extremes of luxury and austerity. He must not fast, nor torture his flesh. He who does so, says the Gita, cannot be a Yogi: He who fasts, he who keeps awake, he who sleeps much, he who works too much, he who does no work, none of these can be a Yogi."⁷⁶

The Message of Vivekananda

Thus the message of Vivekananda to the world is the message of freedom from all types of bondage. It is a message to shed all fears since man is essentially divine. It is a message to be one with the cosmos and the eternity. To quote a couplet from the great Master :

From dreams awake, from bonds be free.

Be not afraid. This mystery,

My shadow, cannot frighten me,

Know once for all that I am He.⁷⁷

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

The philosophy of history of Swami Vivekananda was very much similar to that of Hegel. Like Hegel he believed that the world is the march of the Absolute. Here his interpretation is opposed to the economic interpretation of History advanced by Karl Marx because the Absolute according to Vivekananda is not Matter but the Spirit. He pointed out different periods in the history of Philosophy, Religion and Society. He emphasised the role of dialectical process in social progress. He accepted the role of great individuals in social progress. He pointed out the importance of each of the Varna in social history and maintained that each will rule one after the other. He proclaimed the downfall of European culture and civilization like other contemporary philosophers of history. He could visualise that the down-trodden class of Sudras will rise everywhere in world and rule for some time. Explaining his vision of the future course of history Vivekananda said, "Yes: the Sudras of the world will rise. And that is the dictate of social dynamics that is 'Shivam'. It is as

clear as day-light that the entire Orient will have resurrection or build anew a human world. Lo! the future greatness of China, and in the wake of it, of all the Asiatic nations.. I can see, through the veil, the shadow of coming events of the world.”⁷⁸ His vision of history has come out true not only in the case of China and Russia but also in the case of other countries. He maintained that the future course of history requires a meeting of the East and West for mutual good. In 1895 he wrote, “Europe is on the edge of a volcano. If the fire is not extinguished by a flood of spirituality, it will erupt.”⁷⁹ This warning came true in the form of the First World War after 19 years.

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Society and Social Institutions

Society, according to Vivekananda, is not a human creation but created by God himself. He said, “Love, Renunciation, Unselfishness – three great manifestations of spirituality – from these alone can rise any society, and stand. Neither physical prowess, nor economic superiority, nor practical dexterity can form such a basis.”⁸⁰ Thus, against the western idea of society advanced by Hobbes and others, Vivekananda believed love and sacrifice to be the basis of society. This emphasis is characteristic of Indian culture. In the tradition of Indian philosophy, Vivekananda believed that there is an organic relationship between the individual and the society and therefore the good of either depends upon the other. Explaining this intimate relationship Vivekananda said, “The aggregate of many individuals is called Samashti (the whole), and each individual is called Vyashti (a part). You and I – each is Vyashti, society is Samashti. You, I, an animal, a bird, a worm, an insect, a tree, a creeper, the earth, a planet, a star – each is Vyashti, while this Universe is Samashti.”⁸¹ Thus society is the same as the Absolute. It is a divine creation. It is an aggregate of numerous individuals whose self-sacrifice is required for its welfare. The individual starting from individuality should gradually transcend to the stage of identity with society where collective happiness becomes his own happiness. Religion is the backbone of this structure. It is *Dharma* as maintained by the ancient Indian thinkers. In the tradition of ancient Indian concept of *Purusharthas* Vivekananda maintained that *Dharma* or religion is the key-note of the social solidarity. Explaining this idea he

said, "The sole, the whole force, the whole sanction, the whole cementing power behind society is one and only one... viz. Religion, Spiritualism, Other-worldliness. Society must, of course, provide for economic well-being and physical comforts. But the final aim, as everywhere else, is the development and perfection of the soul – whatever it may mean."⁸² This religion was the Vedanta, the revelation through the Vedas, the spiritual heritage of the Hindus. According to Vivekananda this religion is not only the basis of society but the central binding force of the national life. As opposed to the idea of a secular nation or a national life without religion Vivekananda said, "In India religious life forms the centre, the keynote of the whole music of national life; and if any nation attempts to throw off its national vitality, the direction which has become its own through the transmission of centuries, that nation dies, if it succeeds in the attempt. And, therefore, if you succeed in the attempt to throw off your religion and take up either politics or society, or any other thing as your centre, as the vitality of your national life, the result will be that you will become extinct. To prevent this you must make all and everything work through that vitality of your religion."⁸³

Social Stratification : The Varna System

In contrast to the western system of economic classes, Vivekananda believed that the ancient Indian system of social stratification based upon varna is still the most scientific system. Calling it a kind of social communism he said, "In India, we have social communism, with the light of Advaita – that is, spiritual individualism – playing on and around it; in Europe, you are socially individualists, but your thought is dualistic, which is spiritual communism. Thus the one consists of social institutions, hedged in by individualistic thought while the other is made up of individualist institutions, within the hedge of communistic thought. While Manu laid emphasis on the superiority of Brahmins, Vivekananda condemned the doctrine of *Adhikarvad*. He on the other hand, championed the concept of spiritual equality in the Varna system. He was, however, not against giving the highest place to the learned and the scholars called Brahmins. He was rather proud of the fact that Varna system assigns highest place to the Brahmins. He pointed out that "Spiritual intellect is the central fact of Indian civilisation, all throughout the ages. And all the social customs, even political injunctions, invariably reflect it as natural. Hence the head of Indian society is not the warrior,

but the scholar, the intellectually high and the spiritually sublime wise man – the Brahmin, literally meaning, one whose refuge is Brahman, the Absolute.”⁸⁴ Pointing out the difference between the Western society and India concerning social stratification Vivekananda said, “In every other country, the highest honour belongs to the Kshatriya – the man of the sword. In India the highest honour belongs to the man of peace – the ‘Shramana’ or the ‘Brahmin’, the man of God.”⁸⁵

Thus the social thought of Vivekananda can be termed as socialistic. In his own words, “Thus Western man is born individualistic, the Hindu is socialistic, entirely socialistic.”⁸⁶ This is Neo-vedanta socialism which we shall explain in sequence.

Criticism of Caste-system

In spite of his immense praise for Varna system, Vivekananda was well aware of the fact that the present degeneration of that ancient idea into a rigid caste system is the cause of the degeneration of the nation. He condemned the present caste-system in very clear words. He said, “In spite of all the ravings of the priests, caste is simply a crystallised social institution which after doing its service is now filling the atmosphere of India with its stench, and it can only be removed by giving back to the people their lost social individuality”⁸⁷ He rebuked those who considered following of the caste restrictions necessary for religion. Distinguishing between religion and caste system he said, “In religion there is no caste. A man from the highest caste and a man from the lowest may become a monk in India and the two castes become equal. The caste system is opposed to the religion of Vedanta.”⁸⁸ Thus Vivekananda, in tradition with the social reformers of the Renaissance period, strongly advocated the abolition of inequalities based upon caste system. He wrote, “Caste is a social custom and all our great preachers have tried to break it down. Buddhism downwards, every sect has preached against caste, and every time it has only riveted the chains. Beginning from Buddha down to Rammohan Roy, everyone made the mistake of holding caste to be a religious institution and tried to pull down religion and caste all together, and failed.”⁸⁹

In spite of the above-mentioned severe criticism of caste system Vivekananda realized that this stratification cannot be uprooted unless some better substitute is available. Comparing even the present caste system with the western class system of social

stratification Vivekananda found it better. Since no society can exist without some sort of social stratification Vivekananda advised that the present caste system may be maintained only if we could eliminate casteism. He said, "What caste really is not one in a million understands. There is no country in the world without caste. In India from caste we reach to the point where there is no caste. Caste is based throughout on that principle. The plan in India is to make everybody Brahmin, the Brahmin being the ideal of humanity. If you read the history of India you will find that the attempts have always been made to raise the lower classes. Many are the classes that have been raised. Many more will follow till the whole world will become Brahmin. That is the plan. We have only to raise them without bringing down anybody. And this has mostly to be done by Brahmins themselves, because it is the duty of every aristocracy to dig its own grave; and the sooner it does so, the better for all. No time should be lost. Indian caste is better than the caste which prevails in Europe or America."⁹⁰ Thus the idea underlying the caste system, according to Vivekananda, is to evolve every individual of the society to the level of Brahmin, the supreme and best human individual. Thus caste as a social institution has been given by God to India. Therefore, there is hardly any question of abolishing the caste system. Suggesting re-adjustment of the ancient system according to contemporary needs, Vivekananda said, "From the time of Upanishads down to the present day, nearly all our great teachers have wanted to break through the barriers of caste, *i.e.*, caste in its degenerated state, not the original system, what little good you see in the present caste clings to it from the original caste, which was the most glorious social institution."⁹¹ It should be noted here that similar ideas can be traced to our Renaissance thinkers as well as the contemporary Indian social philosophers.

Some sort of social grouping or stratification is necessary for a social life. Social stratification requires social differentiation. Differentiation, however, need not lead to privileges. It should be accepted only as a natural order. Condemning the provision of special privileges for the higher caste in Hindu social system Vivekananda said, "Caste is good : That is the only natural way of evolving life. Men must form themselves into groups, and you cannot get rid of that. Wherever you go there will be caste. But that does not mean that there should be these privileges. They should be knocked on the head. If you teach Vedanta to the fisherman he will say, "I am as good a man as you, I am a

fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same God in me, as you have in you. And that is what we want, no privilege for anyone, equal chances for all, let everyone be taught that the divine is within, and everyone will work his own salvation."⁹²

Condemnation of Untouchability

The chief evil of casteism is untouchability. It is this evil that is at the basis of all the condemnation of casteism. Like other social thinkers before him Swami Vivekananda severely condemned untouchability. He called it don't touchism. Explaining this evil and its consequence he lamented about the present degeneration and said, "The paths of knowledge, devotion and yoga – all have gone, and now there remains only that of don't-touchism – don't touch me : don't touch me : The whole world is impure and I alone am pure. Lucid Brahmajnana : Bravo! Great God : Now-a-days Brahman is neither in the recesses of the heart, nor in the highest heaven, nor in all beings – now he is in the cooking pot. Formerly the characteristic of a noble minded was to please the whole universe by one's numerous acts of service, "But now it is – I am pure and the whole world is impure..."⁹³

Vivekananda's objections against untouchability were not only social but also philosophical and religious. Untouchability is against the essential spirit of Vedanta which preaches equality of all selves. It is against the socialist idea. Vivekananda has elaborately described in his writings his painful experiences of the disabilities suffered by the untouchable castes. He appealed to Hindus to rise above this petty mentality and to develop love and selflessness for selfishness and narrowness is death while expansion and selflessness is life. He was against everything that narrows, restricts or separates one man from another. Therefore, he pleaded against untouchability and casteism. He not only analysed the malady of untouchability but also suggested possible reforms. The aim of his reform movement was based on the idea of evolving the lower groups of society to the spiritual level of the higher group.

Vivekananda presented three steps as suggestions for raising the level of the untouchables to that of Brahmins. Firstly, he laid emphasis upon circulating spiritual information among all. He said, "My idea is first of all to bring out the gems of spirituality that are stored up in our books and in the possession of few only, hidden as it were, in monasteries and in forests... In one word

I want to make it popular. I want to bring out these ideas and let them be the common property of all, of every man in India."⁹⁴ Secondly, Sanskrit must be taught to all of them since that is the language of the scriptures which are the sources of Indian spiritual knowledge.

Advancing his argument in favour of mass teaching of Sanskrit Vivekananda said, "The attempts of the great Ramanuja and Chaitanya and of Kabir to raise the lower classes of India show that marvellous results were attained during the life-time of those great prophets; yet the later failures have to be explained, and causes shown why the effect of their teachings stopped almost within a century of the passing away of these Masters. The secret is here. They raised the lower classes; they had all the wishes that these should come up, but they did not apply their energies to the spreading of the Sanskrit language among the masses. Even the great Buddha made one false step when he stopped the Sanskrit language from being studied by the masses."⁹⁵ Thirdly, the diffusion of Brahmanic culture in the whole society is also essential. All the privileges and honours attached to Brahmins must be diffused to every member of society and should be available to every one.

Thus in short, though Vivekananda considered the varna system as the ideal form of social stratification and pleaded for the maintenance of caste system in a proper form he upheld the democratic principle of equality and fraternity above all. This will be more clear in our discussion of his Neo-vedanta socialism and his support of democracy. Finally, his criticism and evaluation of the forms of social stratification is based upon humanistic tendency. Like his great master Ramakrishna he was a great humanist and the essence of his Vedanta teaching may be summed up as man-making.

Regeneration of the Masses

Thus Vivekananda waged a movement for regeneration of Indian masses, particularly the backward classes including untouchables and women. He placed the responsibility upon the higher and privileged classes to realise this uplift. According to him the cause of this downfall is not religion but rather the absence of it. He did not hold Hinduism responsible for this lower status of Hindu society. He said, "Religion is not at fault, but it is the Pharisees and the Sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites,

who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny.”⁹⁶ Hinduism teaches equality as it is based on Vedanta philosophy according to which there is one essence underlying everyone.

Religion and Society

As has been already pointed out, Vivekananda considered religion as the key-note of social and national life. This religion was the Vedic religion or the religion preached in Bhagwadgita. Being in tune with modern science and socialist thought, it lays emphasis upon the reality of this world. Neo-Vedanta of Vivekananda was different from Advaita Vedanta of Shankar in laying emphasis upon the reality of the world. He did not negate the objective world but rather considered it as much real as Brahman. He not only praised Sanyas but considered Grahastha to be equally involved. Clarifying his teaching he said, “You can have your wife; it does not mean that you are to obandon her, but that you are to see God in the wife. So also you are to see God in your children. So in everything. In life and in death, in happiness and in misery, the Lord is equally present. The whole world is full of the Lord. Open your eyes and see Him. This is what the Vedanta teaches.”⁹⁷

PRACTICAL VEDANTA

Thus Vivekananda called his Vedanta teaching, a practical Vedanta. In making Vedanta practical philosophy for life he particularly laid emphasis upon the following teaching of Vedanta :

1. **Oneness** : The idea of unity or oneness in the cosmos is the central idea of Vedanta philosophy. This oneness in not only in the multiplicity but also in the facts and ideals, present and future. In the words of Vivekananda, “The actual should be reconciled to the ideal, the present life should be made to coincide with the life eternal.”⁹⁸

2. **Faith in ourselves** : In the practical Vedanta of Vivekananda faith is above everything else. He realised that the main cause of the present degeneration of Indians is the lack of faith in themselves. This was the result of hundreds of years of slavery under the foreign yoke. Realising this fact Vivekananda urged in most of his lectures in very inspiring words to the Indians to have faith in themselves, in their heritage, their philosophy, their language, their literature and their physical,

mental and spiritual strength. This faith is essentially as an Atman, a part of the Brahman, the universal force present everywhere. In the words of Vivekananda, "You are that Sat-chit-ananda, not the small, miserable being that you ignorantly think yourself to be. Your self is the universal self that is one with all things and beings, that shines in the sun, the moon and the stars and illuminates them all. You are first to hear about this self and then constantly meditate on it. Think of yourself as the birthless, the deathless, the blissful, the omniscient, the omnipotent, the very glorious soul. Think on it day and night till the thought enters into your flesh and blood, and you have a vision of the Atman as Brahman. Here you realise your real self as none other than Brahman itself. With this realisation there comes a total transformation of your life and your activities. You live the Vedantic ideal, it becomes a matter of your practical life."⁹⁹

3. God realisation : God realisation in oneself and in society is the teaching of Vedanta. This will result not only in the individual evolution but also in uplift of the masses. Laying emphasis upon this practical teaching of Vedanta Vivekananda said, "He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva, and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary."¹⁰⁰

4. Toleration of other religions : In the tradition of the teachings of his Master Ramakrishna, Vivekananda preached for the toleration towards all the religions of the world. This is particularly required in India since it is the home of the followers of almost all the great religions of the world.

5. Synthesis between the East and the West : Vivekananda was against blind imitation of the West. He urged every nation to follow its own Swadharma. Pointing out the fruitlessness of social westernisation in India he said, "Vain is the attempt to imitate the lines of action that foreign societies have engrafted upon us. It is impossible. Glory unto God, that it is impossible, that we cannot be twisted and tortured into the shape of other nations. I do not condemn the institutions of other races; they are good for them, but not for us. With other sciences, other institutions, and other traditions behind them, they have got their present system. We, with our traditions, with thousands of years of 'Karma' behind us, naturally can only follow our own bent, run in our own grooves, and that we shall have to do."¹⁰¹

In his synthetic outlook Vivekananda considered both East and West as mutually complementary though apparently contradictory. Laying emphasis upon the need of their synthesis he said, "The West is groaning under the tyranny of the Shylocks, and the East is groaning under the tyranny of the priests; each must keep the other in the check. Do not think that one alone is to help the world."¹⁰² The advantages of the contact with the West have been elaborated by so many thinkers including those of Renaissance and modern period in India. But no one raised his voice so high as did Vivekananda, in pointing out the advantages to the West of coming in the contact of India. Warning that without the spiritual contact with the East the West cannot live, he said, "Europe, the centre of the manifestation of material energy, will crumble into dust within fifty years, if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground and make spirituality the basis of her life. And what will save Europe is the religion of the Upanishads."¹⁰³

MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Developing the moral thought in consistency with his practical Vedanta Vivekananda laid emphasis upon the unity of ideal and actual, the end and the means. He said, "For ethics is unity... The highest ethical codes that mankind has discovered upto the present time know no variation, they have no time to stop to look into it; their one end is to make for that sameness..."¹⁰⁴ Laying emphasis on unity in diversity as the central principle in moral philosophy Vivekananda wrote, "The work of ethics has been, and will be in the future, not the destruction of variation and the establishment of sameness in the external world...but to recognise the unity in spite of all these variations, to recognise the God within... and to recognise, the eternal, infinite, essential purity of the soul in spite of everything to the contrary that appears on the surface."¹⁰⁵

A Messiah of the down-trodden, no less than Karl Marx, Vivekananda preached elimination of all exploitation as the highest and eternal morality. Explaining his ethics in most clear terms he said, "Men will be born differentiated; some will have more power than others. We cannot stop that ... but that on account of this power to acquire wealth they should tyrannise and ride roughshod over those, who cannot acquire so much wealth, is

not a part of the law, and the fight has been against that. The enjoyment of advantage over another is privilege, and throughout ages the aim of morality has been its destruction."¹⁰⁶ Thus the task of ethics is to teach the established moral principles such as enjoyment of happiness and elimination of superiority and privileges. All moral philosophy is based upon equality of self in everyone. The teachings of Neo-Vedanta here are very much similar to the democratic ethics.

Ends and Means

Karl Marx believed that the means justify the end. According to Vivekananda, however, the ends justify the means. This close connection between ends and means, emphasised by Vivekananda, was followed by M.K. Gandhi and popularised in Indian politics after him. Pointing out the inseparable relation between the ends and means, Vivekananda said, "One of the greatest lessons I have learned in my life is to pay as much attention to the means as to its end. He was a great man from whom I learned it, and his own life was a practical demonstration of this great principle. I have been always learning great lessons from that one principle, and it appears to me that all the secret of success is there: to pay as much attention to the means as to the end."¹⁰⁷ In tune with the teachings of Bhagwadgita on this issue Vivekananda pointed out that man has a right over the means and never on the achievement of the end. The end is determined not only by our own efforts but by so many other circumstances which are beyond our control. Therefore, it is necessary that we concentrate all our attention upon the means. In the words of Vivekananda, "But whenever failure comes, if we analyse it critically, in ninety-nine per cent of cases we shall find that it was because we did not pay attention to the means, proper attention to the finishing, strengthening, of the means, is what we need. With the means, all right, the end must come. We forget that it is the cause that produces the effect : the effect cannot come by itself; and unless the causes are exact, proper and powerful, the effect will not be produced. Once the ideal is chosen and the means determined, we may almost let go the ideal, because we are sure it will be there, when the means are perfected. When the cause is there, there is no more difficulty about the effect, the effect is bound to come. If we take care of the cause, the effect will take care of itself. The realisation of the ideal is the effect. The means are the cause: attention to the means, therefore is the great secret of life."¹⁰⁸

Emancipation of Women

Besides casteism and untouchability the main evil in Indian society, as diagnosed by Vivekananda is the lower status of women. In Vedic age the status of Indian women was no less than that of men. But after it one witnesses a gradual decline in the status of women in India. After the invasion by foreigners their status became lower and lower so much so that in the time of Vivekananda it was no better than the status of the untouchables. Therefore, Vivekananda wrote, "In India there are two great evils, trampling on the women and grinding the poor through caste restrictions."¹⁰⁹ Hence, uplift of the women, the awakening of the masses must come first, and then only can any real good come about for the country."¹¹⁰ "If the women are raised, then their children will by their noble actions glorify the name of the country – then will culture, knowledge, power and devotion awaken in the country. All nations have attained greatness by paying proper respect to the women. That country and that nation which do not respect the women have never become great, nor will ever be in future."¹¹¹ Vivekananda, however, warned that Indian women cannot raise their status by blindly imitating the western women. He held Sita as an ideal woman and urged Indian women to follow her. Women education, according to him, was no less important than the education of men. Emphasising the education of women in India Vivekananda wrote, "With...education women will solve their own problems, servile dependence on others, and so they are good only to weep at the slightest approach of a mishap or danger. Along with other things they should acquire the spirit of valour and heroism. In the present day it has become necessary for them also to learn self-defence. See how grand was the Queen of Jhansi."¹¹²

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Patriotism

Vivekananda was one of the great patriot sons of India of his time, and even of all times to come. In spite of being very catholic and tolerant and widely travelled he was proud of India and her great culture. He had great faith in the future role of India in the world. Praising the greatness of his country he said, "If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed *Punya*

Bhumi, to be the land to which all souls on this earth must come to account for Karma...the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and of spirituality, it is India.”¹¹³ As an argument to support his faith in the greatness of Indian culture, he pointed out that dozens of great cultures were born in this world, lived for centuries, but today Indian culture is the only ancient culture which is not only alive but which may guide the world in future. He said, “There have been other nations equally glorious that have come and gone, living a few hours of exaltant and of exuberant dominance, and of a wicked national life, and then vanishing like ripples on the face of the waters...but we live, and if ‘Manu’ come back today he would not be bewildered, and would not find himself in a foreign land. The same laws are here, laws adjudicated and thought out through thousands and thousands of years; customs the outcome of the acumen of ages and the experience of centuries, that seem to be eternal, and as the days go by, as blow after blow of misfortune has been delivered upon them, they seem to have served one purpose only, that of making them stronger and more constant.”¹¹⁴ Spirituality is the characteristic of Indian culture that is her gift to the world. Besides spirituality the world has to learn sympathy, toleration and other human virtues from this great country. While praising India, Vivekananda used such sentimental language and inspiring words that he was known as the very embodiment of emotional patriotism.

It was because of his patriotism that Vivekananda so many times pleaded for political liberation of the country, otherwise he was not a politician. He said, “I am no politician or political agitator. I care only for the Spirit...So you must warn the people that no political significance be ever attached falsely to any of my writings or sayings... I have said a few harsh words in honest criticism of Christian Governments in general, but that does not mean that I care for, or have any connection with politics.”¹¹⁵ His demand for political liberation, presented in most inspiring and strong language, influenced almost all the political leaders of his time. During his tour in 1901 at Dacca he said, “Read Bankim Chandra and emulate his ‘deshbhakti’ (patriotism) and ‘Sanatan Dharma’.” Abolish the multiplicity of nations for the unity of the world. He said, “Each nation has its own peculiar method of work. Some work through politics, some through social reforms, some through other lines. With us religion is the only ground

along which we can move. The Englishman can understand religion even through politics. Perhaps the American can understand religion even through social reforms. But the Hindu can understand even politics when it is given through religion; sociology must come through religion, everything must come through religion. For that is the theme, the rest are the variations in the national life music."¹¹⁶ Thus, according to Vivekananda, each nation has its national character and in Indian character religion is the dominant element.

Explaining the constituents of a nation Vivekananda said, "Race, religion, language, Government – all these together make a nation."¹¹⁷ Considering all these elements India is a nation, a nation of the Aryans, Vedic religion, Sanskrit language and its own cultural heritage. What is however required to make it a complete nation is sovereignty. It is therefore that Vivekananda worked for awakening of the masses, the development of their physical and moral strength and creating in them a consciousness of the pride in the ancient glory and greatness of India. It is hence that he was hailed as one of the great architect of modern nationalism in India. Urging the Indian masses to regain their individuality and to rise on the occasion he said, "We as a nation have lost our individuality, and that is the cause of all mischief in India. We have to give back to the nation its lost individuality and raise the masses. The Hindu, the Mohammedan, the Christian, all have trampled them under foot. Again, the force to raise them must come from inside, that is, from the orthodox Hindus. In every country evil exists not with, but against religion. Religion, therefore, is not to blame, but men."¹¹⁸ Explaining his Neo-vedanta religion required for the mass-uplift in India, Vivekananda declared, "The essence of my religion is strength. The religion that does not infuse strength into the heart, is no religion to me, be it of the Upanisads, the Gita, or the Bhagvatam. Strength is greater than religion and nothing is greater than strength."¹¹⁹ The chief source of this strength, according to Vivekananda, is proper education of the masses. He said, "We have to give them secular education. We have to follow the plan laid down by our ancestors, that is, to bring all the ideals slowly down among the masses. Raise them slowly up, raise them to equality. Impart ... secular knowledge through religion."¹²⁰

Internationalism

In spite of being a great patriot and a staunch nationalist Vivekananda was no less an internationalist. Though he wanted his nation to maintain its individuality, he was against exclusiveness in national life. He said, "I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and wherever such an attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy or holiness – the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one. The fact of our isolation from all the other nations of the world is the cause of our degeneration and its only remedy is getting back into the current of the rest of the world. Motion is the sign of life."¹²¹ Laying emphasis upon the need of international cooperation in political, economic and social field, Vivekananda said, "In politics and sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago can no more be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International organisation, international combinations, international laws are the cry of the day. That shows the solidarity."¹²²

Neo-Vedanta Socialism

During his tour of the West Vivekananda had occasions to study intimately, socialism, communism and their practical application. He had also occasions to discuss these political philosophies with renowned people. Defining socialism he said, "The doctrine which demands the sacrifice of individual freedom to social supremacy is called socialism, while that which advocates the cause of the individual is called individualism."¹²³ Knowing the advantages and limitations of socialism Vivekananda proclaimed, "I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread." He prophesied about India that the future of socialism is bright in this country. He investigated the cause of social and political decline of India and lamented that the privileged classes have everywhere tried to exploit the lower classes.

Thus with the socialist and communist thinkers of his time, Vivekananda was convinced that the labour class has the potentiality of creating a social, economic and political revolution in the country. The inner processes in this revolution have been however very differently explained by Vivekananda. As against

the role of economic and material forces in future revolution, Vivekananda considered the revolution to be possible only through the spiritual forces. His socialism therefore, is different from the materialist socialism of the West.

In spite of his emphasis on spirituality Vivekananda admitted the value of material possessions in life. He said, "In material civilization nay, even luxury is necessary to create work for the poor. Bread ! Bread ! I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven ! ..."²⁴ And yet he condemned the materialist philosophy of levelling down and maintained the Vedanta philosophy of levelling up. The higher varnas, in revolution, have not to come down to the level of the lower varnas, but the lower varnas have to rise higher to the level of the higher varnas. In this way the revolution imagined by Vivekananda is almost opposed to that of Karl Marx. In his own words, "In the beginning of the Satya-Yuga (Golden age) there was one caste, the Brahmins, and then by difference of occupations they went on dividing themselves into different castes ... And in the coming Satya-yuga all the other castes will have to go back to the same condition."²⁵ Therefore, the revolution need not be violent or through class hatred, on the other hand it will be through democratic techniques and spiritual methods. Thus socialism, according to Vivekananda, is not an end in itself, it is a mere means, one of the best means to achieve a spiritual democratic society. In fact, though Vivekananda praised socialism here and there, his social ideal was spiritual democracy and not a socialist society. This ideal is very much in keeping with the ancient Indian traditional social philosophy.

SPIRITUAL DEMOCRACY

Spiritual Liberty

Democracy is based upon the three fundamental values of liberty, equality and fraternity. While praising these triune principles Vivekananda interpreted them in spiritual sense. Explaining his idea of spiritual freedom he said, "To advance towards freedom, physical, mental and spiritual, and help others to do so is the supreme prize of man. These social rules which stand in the way of the unfoldment of this freedom are injurious, and steps should be taken to destroy them speedily. Those

institutions should be encouraged by which men advance in the path of freedom..."¹²⁶ Pointing out the value of liberty as a natural right he said, "Liberty does not certainly mean the absence of obstacles in the path of misappropriation of wealth, etc., by you and me, but it is our natural right to be allowed to use our own body, intelligence or wealth according to our will, without doing any harm to others; and all the members of society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education, or knowledge."¹²⁷

In tradition with the Renaissance thinkers Vivekananda considered the individual as the centre of society. A nation is great because of the greatness of its individuals. Therefore Vivekananda asked Indians to develop self-reliance and self-confidence. Real freedom, according to him, is the spiritual freedom which includes individual as well as social freedom. In fact it is a gradual progress towards liberation. This freedom can be attained by the individual through constant unceasing effort to help others and love others, through worship in prayer, praise and meditation and through the knowledge following meditation. Thus liberty is complimentary to action.

Essential Equality

Besides liberty equality is also necessary to realize a democratic society. Equality is the way to freedom while inequality is the way to bondage. Pointing out the value of equality for liberty Vivekananda said, "No man and no nation can attempt to gain physical freedom without physical equality, nor mental freedom without mental equality."¹²⁸ Absolute equality, however, is impossible. It is against the law of nature. Though all beings are equally manifestations of God, yet difference is the basis of manifestation. This, however, does not eliminate the spiritual equality which can be seen everywhere. Explaining this spiritual equality as a fundamental principle of Vedanta, Vivekananda said, "The idea that one man is born superior to another has no meaning in Vedanta; that between two nations one is superior and other inferior has no meaning whatsoever. Put them in the same circumstances, and see whether the same intelligence comes out or not. Before that you have no right to say that one nation is superior to another. And as to spirituality, no privilege should be claimed there ... There are no special messengers of God, never were, and never can be. All beings great or small, are

equally manifestations of God, the difference is only in the manifestations."¹²⁹

Spiritual Fraternity

Liberty and equality are incomplete without fraternity. This fraternity again, according to Vivekananda should be spiritual fraternity. Explaining this idea he said, "That is a grand idea we ought to remember. In every man, in every animal, however weak or wicked, great or small, resides the same omnipresent, omniscient soul. The difference is not in the soul, but as a principle he is the same as I am, he is my brother, he has the same soul as I have."¹³⁰

Ancient Democratic Ideal

Thus Vivekananda considered democracy as the best form of Government. He was against monarchy though it has been praised in ancient Indian literature. He also condemned aristocracy as the tyranny of a minority. Though he was very much aware of the defects of democratic forms of Govt. in different countries of his own time he praised it as the only type of Govt. in which a spiritual society may be possible. Explaining his idea of democracy in the tradition of ancient Indian thought he said that, "the voice of the ruled in the government of their land – which is the watchword of the modern Western world, and of which the last expression has been echoed with a thundering voice in the Declaration of the American Government, in the words, "That the government of the people of this country must be by the people and for the good of the people" – cannot however be said to have been totally unrecognised in Ancient India."¹³¹

Self Government

Thus the ideal government is self government. *Swadharma* is the principle of life everywhere, individual, social, economic or political. This self government is possible only through acting upon the teaching of Upanisads. In the words of Vivekananda, "When the government of a country is guided by codes of laws, enjoined by Shastras which are the outcome of knowledge inspired by the divine genius of great sages, such a government must lead to the unbroken welfare of the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, the king and the subjects alike."¹³²

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6

SRI AUROBINDO

Every branch of human knowledge has its reason, its merit and its own sphere of work and each is helpful in the dialectical progression of knowledge. Philosophy logically arranges the eternal modes of Sat. Religion practically and vitally arranges the personal relations of Sat. Science arranges the particular forms and modes of Sat through observation and analysis. Philosophy is a systematisation by critical analysis, religion is faith in union with Divine and science the observation and analysis of its particular forms. Thus, all are inter-related in the One Supreme Divine, which is their common subject matter. All pursue God in various ways. All look to Him from their own perspective. The ultimate truths of philosophy are held realisable in religion. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "A religion that is not the expression of philosophic truth degenerates into superstition and obscurantism and a philosophy which does not dynamise itself with the religious spirit is a barren light for it cannot get itself practised."¹ While philosophy satisfies the reason, religion satisfies the emotions and since the Reality must satisfy our whole being, both are equally necessary.² Hegel's exaltation of philosophy, as the highest, is vitiated by the fallacy of the substitution of mere part for the whole. All Philosophy, Religion and Science are mere means for the realisation of the integral knowledge of the Divine.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Philosophy and Religion

Sri Aurobindo does not wish to maintain that all philosophy without religion is useless. The pursuit of truth for its own sake has its value, and even a philosophy without religion can give us

at least some insight in the spiritual destiny of man. The importance of the truths of epistemology cannot be undervalued by any serious thinker. The demonstration of the irrepressibility of self and thought has its own value. Logic trains the intellect and removes doubts. But the ultimate truth can only be grasped by a coalescence of philosophy with religion.³

Philosophy, Religion and Science

All knowledge is the knowledge of God. We live, move and have our being in Divine. From God to God is our journey. "To get at this as a spiritual presence is the aim of religion, to grow into harmony with its nature of light, love, strength and purity is the aim of ethics, to enjoy and mould ourselves into the harmony of its eternal beauty and delight is the aim and consummation of our aesthetic need and nature, to know and to be according to its eternal principles of truth is the end of science and philosophy and of all our insistent drive towards knowledge."⁴ Thus, philosophy, religion and science have their own *Sandharma* and their own methods to achieve the goal. In the integral knowledge, neither of these is subordinated to the other, still less is any annihilated, but all are transformed to become still better instruments of spiritual evolution. A philosophic statement about self is merely a rational formula and yet it may serve to remove a great barrier and subdue the revolting intellect to the truth of Spirit. Similar touches may be attained in religion, ethics or science. To quote Sri Aurobindo: "All religion, all occult knowledge, all super normal psychological experience and discipline are sign posts, and directions pointing us upon that road of progress of the occult self-unfolding Spirit."⁵

Knowledge and Ignorance

Knowledge, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the same as Brahman, the one, the eternal, the infinite and harmonious. The integral knowledge is already there in the integral Reality. It is not a new or still non-existent thing that has to be created, acquired, learned, invented or built up by the mind. It must rather be discovered or uncovered. It is a Truth that is self-revealed to a spiritual endeavor, for it is there veiled in our deeper and greater self. It is the very stuff of our own spiritual consciousness, and it is by waking to it even in our surface self that we have to possess it. The ignorance, on the other hand,

considered as a power of manifoldly self-absorbed and self-limiting concentration of the conscious being, is a natural capacity of variation in his self-conscious knowledge. This is one of the possible poises of the relation of the Absolute in its manifestation.

Three ways of Consciousness

Consciousness, the fundamental fact of existence, is experienced as operating in three ways. Firstly, there is the supreme divine self knowledge, embracing unity as well as multiplicity. In contrast to it, there is the complete nescience of the consciousness itself, an effective, dynamic, creative Inconscience. Between these two, Knowledge and Nescience, is the Ignorance – “Our own characteristic way of the soul’s self with-holding of complete self-knowledge.” Ignorance is seeking or preparing to transform itself by a progressive illumination of its darkness into the knowledge, that is already concealed within it.

Integral Knowledge

Knowledge is not only a mental process but a matter of whole being. An integral spiritual consciousness carries in it a knowledge of all the terms of being; it links the highest to the lowest through all the mediating terms and achieves an indivisible whole. The physical, the vital, the mental and finally, the physical, all equally take part in the achievement of knowledge. Any conflict among them leads to ignorance and error. In integral knowledge, there are three steps of self-achievement, which are, at the same time, three sides of the same one knowledge. The first is the discovery of the secret psychic entity. The next step is to realise the eternal self in all beings. The third step is to know the Divine being who is at once our supreme transcendent self, the cosmic Being, foundation of our universality and Divinity within.

Four powers of Absolute

The absolute has four powers of its consciousness, holding together in a single indivisible being. The first, the essential, is at one end, the superconscient silence and at the other end, the Inconscience. The second, the integral, is the total Consciousness of Sacchidananda, the supplemental concentration. The third, the multiple, is the method of the totalising or global overmental awareness. The fourth, the separative, is the characteristic nature of the Ignorance. Thus, the Ignorance is a poise of the consciousness

Force. There is a limited, practical, self oblivious exclusive concentration at the root of Ignorance. This is further heightened in man by his habit of exclusively living in the present, forgetful of the past as well as the future. This existence in the moment is only a pragmatic truth, a half true, half-false knowledge, an ignorance, since what he forgets is contained in the all retaining integral consciousness within man. Just as the mind's concentration on one task at a time is not a weakness but strength, so the exclusive concentration of the consciousness on ego, serves a pragmatic purpose. And just as the former can be dissolved by the mind at any time, so the man, though not easily can by an arduous self-training, self-depending, self-heightening, self-expansion, go back to the real self. Hence, in both cases, the difference is phenomenal and not essential. Ignorance is valid in its own sphere, but must be gradually eliminated by knowledge.

The Purpose of Ignorance

"Ignorance", according to Sri Aurobindo, "is Nature's purposeful oblivion of the self and the All, leaving them aside, putting them behind herself in order to do solely what she has to do in some outer play of existence." The purpose of ignorance is to trace the cycle of self-oblivion and self-discovery, for which the secret spirit assumes ignorance in Nature. Its origin is a limitation of knowledge. Its distinctive character is a separation of the being from its own integrity and entire reality. Its boundaries are determined by this separative development of the consciousness, for it shuts us to our true self and to the true nature of things, and obliges us to live in an apparent surface existence. Evolution is impossible without ignorance since a progress in knowledge implies an elimination of ignorance. Manifestation is conceivable only if there is a development of knowledge through ignorance. An existence without ignorance shall be a static existence though divine and perfect. Such, of course, is not the world of our experience. The world is neither perfect nor a purposeless fall. A steady and whole view of the world will depict ample design and purpose. To conceive the world as an inexplicable blunder of the All-conscient, is to despair of all human destiny. Ignorance is a purposeful descent, a divine opportunity, a necessary though subordinate term, which the universal knowledge has imposed on itself. The Divine Sacchidananda descends to find himself in the apparent opposites of His being and His nature.

Locus of Ignorance

Ignorance, according to Sri Aurobindo, is a separative knowledge, forgetful of the unity underlying the many. Such an ignorance, obviously, cannot have its locus in Sacchidananda which is integral and undivided whole. "Integral Brahman cannot be in its integrity the source of the Ignorance because its integrity is in its very all-consciousness."⁷ Hence, ignorance is neither original nor primal. Maya, if it be an original power of the consciousness of the Eternal, cannot itself be an ignorance, but must be a transcendent and universal power of self-knowledge and all knowledge. Ignorance can only intervene as a minor and subsequent movement, partial and relative. Neither is ignorance the nature of multiplicity, since dualism is a characteristic only of the outer layer of mental and physical. The many in the integrity or in each self of the many cannot be really ignorant of the one or of others. Thus, ignorance is neither the nature of one nor of many since both are equally real. It is a product of the exclusive concentration of mental level.

Sevenfold Ignorance and Sevenfold Knowledge

Ignorance, according to Sri Aurobindo, is sevenfold. The first and the most fundamental is the Original Ignorance due to which we forget the true nature of the Absolute and concentrate on either Being or Becoming as the sole reality. The second is the Cosmic Ignorance due to which we take Becoming to be the true nature of Cosmic and tend to forget Being working being it. The third is the Egoistic Ignorance due to which we identify the ego with the true self and forget our universal nature. The fourth, the temporal Ignorance leads us to imagine our present short span of life to be the whole thing, forgetting the immortal nature of self. Even this view is further narrowed due to Psychological Ignorance which makes us concentrate on the surface nature and forget the levels of consciousness below or above it. Besides there is the Constitutional Ignorance due to which we forget our whole integral being and think body, life or mind or any two of these to be the whole man. All these six types of Ignorance lead to the seventh, the Practical Ignorance which is responsible for our entire error, evil, falsehood and pain in this world. It leads to all types of frictions between individuals and societies.

Thus, to obtain integral knowledge, man must get rid of these seven types of ignorance. He must know the true nature

of the Absolute, the cosmos, the self, the becoming of self, the nature of subconscious and superconscious levels, the complex nature of the integral being and finally, the real use of our thought, will and action. Thus integral knowledge necessarily, leads to integration and transformation of the entire nature into the truth of Spirit.⁸

The Role of Reason in Knowledge

"All this labour of speculation," according to Sri Aurobindo, "has its utility in training the human mind and helping to keep before it the idea of something beyond and ultimate towards which it must turn. But the intellectual reason can only point vaguely or feel gropingly towards it or try to indicate partial and even conflicting aspects of its manifestation here, it cannot enter into it and know it."⁹ The reason cannot arrive at any finality in its conclusions because it can neither go to the root nor grasp the whole. Nor can it supply dynamic force to life. Thought, however free it may be from sense error, desire, old association and intellectual prejudice only becomes effective when it is accompanied by vision, experience and realisation. Not logic but a higher intuition alone can be the judge of the value of lower intuition. It is certain that ultimately logic and experience must be harmonised. But, to attain that harmony, it is the logic which should be dynamic, it is the mind which should submit. As Sri Aurobindo says, "Logic, after all is only a measured dance of the mind, nothing else."¹⁰

The defects of the intellect are, of course, too many to enumerate e.g., its leaning towards doubt, its arrogance to judge suprarational, its attempt to explain supra-physical proof of the higher and spiritual. But these and other defects are inherent only in ordinary unenlightened intellect which is not guided by realisation. Just as the characteristic defect of uncontrolled and unregenerate vital are no argument against the value of the vital itself, so also failures of reason do not authorise us to condemn reason as such. The seeker after integral truth, of course, must be on his guard against mistaking the mental suggestions and intellectual conclusions for realisation. Again, the restlessness of the mind, which disturbs the spontaneous activity of the psychic principle and retards the descent of the true illuminating knowledge or else deforms it as soon as or even before it fully touches the human mind, must be controlled by strenuous efforts. "But", as

Sri Aurobindo points out, "if the intellect is surrendered, open, quiet, receptive, there is no reason why it should not be a means of reception of the light or an aid to the experience of spiritual states and to the fullness of an inner change."¹¹ If light can be received through vital, emotional or physical, there is no reason why it should not be so through thinking mind. The only thing required is to make it ally to realisation. The mind should be trained and enlightened to receive the higher truth. Besides its downward and outward action, the reason has also an upward and inward eye and a more luminous functioning which help it to grasp divinations from hidden eternities. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "The intellect is not capable by itself of bringing us into touch with the concrete Spiritual Reality, but it can help by a mental formulation of the truth of the Spirit which explains it to the mind and can be applied even in the more direct seeking – this help is of capital importance."¹² It is rather unfortunate that the secret truths, men translated into intellectual concepts, become disparate and conflicting ideals. We have all the difficulties in trying to bring them into any kind of harmony since the efforts of our life advance by a sort of experimental and empirical seeking. But as the reason progresses vertically and horizontally, the inner and outer life advances in width and depth. New possibilities of self-knowledge and self-realisation are opened, and awakenings into spiritual consciousness become more certain. It prepares a sort of base for spiritual regeneration. According to Sri Aurobindo, "Reason is not the supreme light and yet it is always a necessary light-bringer and unless it has been given its rights and allowed to judge and purify our first infra-rational instincts, impulses, rash favours, crude beliefs and blind pre-judgements, we are not altogether ready for the full unveiling of a greater inner illumining."¹³

The Logic of Infinite

"What is magic to our finite reason is the logic of the infinite."¹⁴ The ultimate Reality cannot be deduced or induced by a reasoning which proceeds from a consideration of the elements of name and form and makes that its standard. "An ignorant half-knowledge cannot follow the motions of an All knowledge."¹⁵ As the things become more and more complex, as the chain of evolution rises, the process becomes more indeterminable. As the order of reality changes so do the conceptions, measures and standards applicable to it. The laws of physical world do not apply to non-physical.

The laws of life are inadequate to explain human mind. Again, the finite cannot explain the infinite, the divisible, the Indivisible. Our standards of logic, may be suitable in their own sphere but when applied to other phenomena they are inadequate. Reason finds it difficult to deal with infra-rational or supra-rational. The indeterminable determines itself as infinite and finite. The immutable admits a constant mutability and differences. The self has a nature and yet something other than its nature. The one becomes an innumerable multitude and the Impersonal creates or supports the personality and is a person. Being turns into becoming and yet it is always itself and other than its becomings. The individual universalises itself and the universal individualises itself. Brahman is at once devoid of qualities and capable of infinite qualities, the Lord and Doer of works and yet a non-doer and a silent witness of the workings of nature. All these judgements contradict each other.

But, does it mean that the ways of Infinite are illogical? "To understand truly the world-process of the infinite and the time process of the Eternal," as Sri Aurobindo points out, "the consciousness must pass beyond this finite reason and the finite sense to a larger reason and spiritual sense in touch with the consciousness of the Infinite and responsive to the logic of the Infinite which is the very logic of being itself and arises inevitably from its self-operation of its own realities, a logic whose sequences are not the steps of thought, but the steps of existence."¹⁶ The Infinitesimal and Infinite are indeterminate but not irrational magical feats. Every order of reality has its own logic peculiar to it. There is a logic in the ways of Infinite since there are connections and relations infallibly seen and executed. But it is spiritual or supplemental reason. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "It is a greater reason, a greater logic because it is more vast, subtle, complex in its operations: it comprehends all the data which our observation fails to seize, it deduces from them results which neither our deduction nor induction can anticipate, because our conclusions and inferences have a meagre foundation and are fallible and brittle."¹⁷ The logic of Infinite contradicts our finite reason because it comprehends the unlimited, the whole and the essence, while our finite logic is more or less confined to part, the limited and the superficial names and forms.

The Integral Method

“Our ways of knowing,” says Sri Aurobindo, “must be appropriate to that which is to be known.”¹⁸ Methods must change according to the nature of knowledge. A physical method, based on the testimony of senses, will necessarily stumble at the overt aspects of the things and cannot know subjectively. The attempt to know it as an object is both a logical and psychological impossibility. A mathematical method will tell only about the mental relations and the ontological status of Reality. A phenomenological method is valid only in the field of phenomena. A transcendental method will arrive only at the *a priori* forms of intuition and categories of understanding. A dialectical method would give us the process of mental movement. A direct intuitive method alone can give a direct view of Reality.¹⁹

But Reason and intuition are mutually negative only in the field of ignorance. In knowledge, on the other hand, they include and affirm each other. As Bergson says, “Dialectic is necessary to put intuition to the proof, necessary also in order that intuition should ‘break itself up into concepts and so be propagated to other men.’”²⁰ So long as the sense, the external impressions and the analytic method dominate reason, it is a denial of intuition and a bar to spiritual experience. But purified, supplemented and illumined, it conceptualises the supra-conceptual and universalises the spiritual experience. Reason was the helper, reason is the bar, and reason again becomes a helper.

According to Sri Aurobindo, “To see things steadily and see them whole is not possible to the mind, but it is the very nature of the transcendent supermind.”²¹ A spiritual intuition, however, satisfies reason, intuition as well as experience, since the Reality must satisfy our whole being. It alone may satisfy the conflict between various faculties of man, claiming for superiority, to explain all the enigmas of metaphysics, reason, will, vital intuition, emotion and perception, all have at a time or other tried to solve all the puzzles but only gave impetus to reaction in favour of other. Thus philosophy passed from Rationalism to Empiricism, Voluntarism, Romanticism and Mysticism, etc. A synoptic view of the dialectical movement of the spirit, welding all these component parts in its unified march, is the only solution which can bring us to some real advance in the solution of the metaphysical problems. A philosophy based on a logical treatment of the experience of our whole being, is the only philosophy

worthy of its name. Such a philosophy can only be arrived by an integral method. The basic fallacy underlying the conflicting views in philosophy is the exclusive emphasis on a particular type of experience. A spiritual intuition, on the other hand, explains all intuitions. According to Sri Aurobindo, "As in science so in metaphysical thought, that general and ultimate solution is likely to be the best which includes and accounts for all so that each truth of experience takes its place in the whole."²² A consummating experience which eliminates the lesser ones, or like that of Samkara, transcends the lower experiences has its own validity in philosophy. But to know the Reality integrally, an integral experience is needed, which does not reject but transform even the lowest type of experience. Such is the spiritual intuition. As Sri Aurobindo says, "The spiritual intuition lays hold always upon the reality, it is the luminous harbinger of the spiritual realisation or else its illuminative light; it sees that which the other powers of our being are labouring to explore; it gets at the firm truth of the abstract representations of the heart and life, a truth which is itself neither remotely abstract nor outwardly concrete, but something else for which these are only two sides of its psychological manifestation to us."²³ Spiritual intuition does not negate the experience gained through physical, vital or mental instruments. Whereas the latter seeks to abstract one particular type of experience from the others, spiritual intuition embraces the whole. It is a knowledge through whole being. It is a direct vision, an authentic seeing, a comprehensive intuitive apprehension.

But the method *par excellence* is the integral yoga. To Sri Aurobindo, there is no difference in knowing and being. Hence, to know the Divine, the philosopher must become the Divine. "For", as Sri Aurobindo points out, "our means and ways of knowledge and action must necessarily be according to the nature of our consciousness and it is the consciousness that must radically change if we are to command and not only be occasionally visited by that higher power of knowledge."²⁴ Intellectual knowledge is wholly separative one. Intuition is only a fragmentary glimpse. The logic, knowledge or gnosis starts from Truth, knows it directly and hence its truth is self-evident and absolute. Memory, imagination, observation, comparison, contrast, analogy and reasoning and other instruments of mental knowledge turn into direct intuitive truth-aspiration of totality in Gnosis. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy itself is a reasoned intellectual interpretation of his experience through integral yoga. It is in yoga alone that the

spiritual intuition manifests in its fullness and integral knowledge is attained. Yogic knowledge is the authentic knowledge of the Divine.

METAPHYSICS

The Absolute

According to Sri Aurobindo "All theories that make the Becoming sufficient to itself are therefore half truths, valid for some knowledge of the manifestation acquired by an exclusive concentration upon what they affirm and envisage, but otherwise valid only because the Being is not separate from the Becoming but present in it, constitutive of it, inherent in its every infinitesimal atom and in its boundless expansion and extension."²⁵ The theories of Reality as change have their truth in the fact of Becoming but even to know this truth completely, the knowledge of being is equally necessary. The Absolute is a supracosmic Reality, Being, Existence, Consciousness, Delight, Sacchidananda but at the same time it is also the cosmic Reality, the Becoming. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "The Being is One but this oneness is infinite and contains in itself an infinite plurality or multiplicity of itself; the one is the all; it is not only an essential existence but an All-Existence."²⁶

With Upanishads, Sri Aurobindo takes Sacchidananda to be the ultimate Reality. The Absolute is Sacchidananda. Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. But again, according to Sri Aurobindo, "Sacchidananda is the One with a triple aspect. In the Supreme, the three are not three but one, existence is consciousness, consciousness is bliss, and they are thus inseparable, not only inseparable but so much like each other that they are not distinct at all."²⁷

These words have no preciseness and are capable of a plastic application which avoids both vagueness and rigid intellectualism. Brahman is the Absolute which embraces all relativities. He is the inner self of all. He is the One in the Many, the conscious in unconscious. He is the cause as well as effect and the law of causality. He is space and all that is in space. He is the subject as well as the object, the thinker and the thought. "All realities and all aspects and all semblances are the Brahman; Brahman is the Absolute, the transcendent and incommunicable, the

Supracosmic Existence that sustains the cosmos, the Cosmic Self that upholds all beings, but it is too the self of each individual : the soul or psychic entity is an eternal portion of the Isvara ; it is his supreme Nature or consciousness Force that has become the living being in the world of living beings."²⁸

Thus, according to Sri Aurobindo, the Divine has three aspects:²⁹

1. It is the Cosmic self and Spirit, that is in and behind all things and beings, from which and in which all is manifested in the universe although at present in Ignorance.
2. It is the Spirit and Master of our own being within us.
3. It is the transcendent Being and Spirit, all bliss, light, knowledge and power.

Parabrahman is indescribable and incoceivable. As Sri Aurobindo says, "It is not Being or Non-Being but something of which Being and Non-Being are primary symbols; no Atman or Un-atman or Maya; not personality or Impersonality; not quality or Non-quality; not consciousness; or non-consciousness; not bliss or Non-Bliss; not pursusa or prakriti; not God nor man nor animal, not release nor bondage; but something of which all these are primary or derivative, general or particular symbols." But he hastens to add, "Still, when we say Parabrahman is not this or that, we mean that It cannot in its essentiality be limited to this or that symbol or any sum of symbols; in a sense Parabrahman is all this and all this is Parabrahman."³⁰

The God

The ultimate of philosophy and the *Summum Bonum* of religion, according to Sri Aurobindo, are merely two aspects of the same one Reality. Thus, God is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. "Omnipresent, for all forms are forms of His conscious being created by its force of movement in its own extension as Space and Time : omniscient, for all things exist in His conscious being, are formed by it and possessed by it; omnipotent, for this all possessing consciousness is also an all possessing Force and all informing will."³¹ God is immanent and transcendent, individual and universal, the creator, the preserver, the destroyer of everything. He is the helper, the guide, the beloved and the All lover. He is separate and yet one with all beings. Outside of Him exists nothing. God is determinate, free, perfect, eternal and self

of all. He is Being as well as Becoming. The evolution of the world is the manifestation of His multiple aspects. He is the efficient and the material, the first and the final cause of the world. He is the last in the chain of perfection and yet all inclusive. He is subject as well as object. He is the object of devotion, love and mystic union. He is endowed with such qualities as veracity, grace, knowledge and bliss. He is free from pain, evil, suffering, ignorance, limitation etc. He is self-conscious supreme Person. He is the matrix, the *nisus* as well as the goal of evolution. As creator, God is Supermind.

Sri Aurobindo calls God, Para purusa and Absolute, the Parabrahman. While the former is manifest, the latter is unmanifest, though ultimately the two are One. As Sri Aurobindo says, "God or Para Purusa is Parabrahman unmanifest and the inexpressible, turned towards a certain kind of manifestation of expression, of which the two eternal terms are Atman and Jagati, Self and Universe."³² The manifestation is the development of the unmanifest; the form is the form of the formless. Parabrahman himself becomes Para Purusa.

Now, here, it appears that God and Absolute have not been clearly distinguished. To say that God is Parabrahman turned towards a certain kind of manifestation, is to assert that God is not Absolute since Absolute as Sri Aurobindo further points out, is manifest as well as unmanifest. When God is only the manifested aspect of Parabrahman, and not identical with it, how can it be said that "God being Parabrahman is himself the Absolute."³³ The manifested aspect of Reality certainly, does not exhaust the whole of it. Again, if God is himself the Absolute, then we should assert that a certain part of it is also unknowable. Such sort of difficulties, however, can be solved only on the basis of the logic of the Infinite. The knowledge of Absolute and God is not a matter of mind but of consciousness and hence intellect cannot give laws to it. In the field of the Infinite, philosophy has the pious duty to faithfully describe the facts of experience. It is for the convenience of mental understanding that a distinction is made between Absolute and God, Parabrahman and Para-Purusa. But while dealing with the concepts we must not forget their experiential context. Sri Aurobindo has taken every care to analyse the experience but still he always warns us not to take them too rigidly but to use them as dynamic instruments to understand the ever growing experience of Truth.

Sri Aurobindo has not reached Parabrahman by dialectical method. The only way to know the Absolute is the ever deepening, ever widening, ever enlarging spiritual experience. A sound philosophy of the Absolute must be philosophy of affirmation since the Absolute is all and all is in the Absolute. Every intuition, however partial it may be, has its own truth and hence no philosophy based on any intuitive experience can be rejected downright.³⁴ The only dispute is with those who deny the truth of other views and claim to hold Infinite in their finite grip. According to Sri Aurobindo, "Advaita is true, because the Many are only manifestation of the One, Visistadvaita is true because ideas are eternal and having manifested, must have manifested before and will manifest again – the Many are eternal in the One, only they are sometimes manifest and sometimes unmanifest. Advaita is true because although from one point of view one and the Many are eternally and essentially the same, yet from another, the idea in its manifestation is eternally different from the Intelligence in which it manifests."³⁵ A true philosophy of the Absolute must find place for all other philosophies. As in science so in philosophy, the better theory is the more comprehensive one, that which explains the other as well as transcends them.

Sri Aurobindo is neither a dogmatist nor a sceptic. Parabrahman, according to him is neither fully known nor absolutely unknowable. As we rise in our experience, we know Him more and more. It is hence that to build a system in philosophy is unphilosophical. Like Croce, Bergson, Whitehead and others, Sri Aurobindo leaves the knowledge free and developing and does not confine it to a closed and rigid system. He is not a system-builder but a seer, always trying for more and more integral experience and ever vigilant to observe, examine, compare, improve and even change.³⁶ A catholicity of approach and a spirit of toleration is the marked characteristic of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. His is a dynamic approach, always growing in knowledge, but never claiming to reach the Absolute in its totality. In philosophy it is the search and sincerity, the patience and strenuous effort to travel the path, which counts more than the claim to absolute knowledge. A true philosopher is a lover of wisdom and never a sole possessor of it.

Self and Individuality

Multiplicity is as much real as Unity. Individual is no more

a part of Absolute or its attribute or more than it is its appearance. Organic relation cannot explain the ways of the Absolute. As Sri Aurobindo beautifully puts it, "All these things it can be at once, eternal spirit universalised in cosmos, individualised in its beings; it can too found the consciousness rejecting, governing or responding to the action of Nature in any one of them, to put others behind it or away from it, know itself as pure eternity, self-supporting universality or exclusive individuality."³⁷

The Real Individual

"Man", according to Sri Aurobindo, "is a spirit using the mind, life and body for an individual and a communal experience and self-manifestation in the universe."³⁸ The Sacchidananda itself descends in the finite for the delight of self-manifestation. Self is the same as Absolute. Thus, in the integral Absolute of Sri Aurobindo, the individual is as much real as the universal or Transcendent. Such a view steers clear of both the extremes of a complete affirmation and absolute denial. The individual is neither a mere shadow nor something existing apart from the Divine. It is real and yet real only in the Absolute. Separative tendency leads to what Sri Aurobindo calls, "Original ignorance."³⁹ From the point of view of creation, the individual is the concentration point of the "consciousness-force."⁴⁰ Integral knowledge does not result in the abolition of the individual since this concentration of the consciousness-force is not an illusion but a real purposive activity, the attainment of the return of the force to its original home in Sacchidananda. Nature becomes self-conscious in man. The manifestation of Divinity in the individual is the condition of evolution of Nature back to its source. Consciousness-force creates through diffusion and concentration. Universe is the diffusion of the Absolute in infinite space and time, the individual, its concentration within spatio-temporal limits. In the individual, Prakrti turns back to perceive Purusa, world seeks after self; God having entirely become Nature, Nature seeks to become progressively God. Individual is true and lives even in unity with the universal. Man's aim is to universalise and impersonalise himself, in order to manifest Divine. Yet, he is called upon to preserve his individuality even when he reaches the widest universality of consciousness. It is the ego that is to be uprooted. Individual is an ontological reality, eternal as the Absolute, not co-existent but existent in and through Him.

The ultimate Reality, according to Sri Aurobindo, is a unity manifesting in trinity – of essentiality, commonality and individuality. The unity, however, is not organic but more complex than that. It is a spiritual relation expressed in the famous upanishadic formula of a whole coming out of a whole and leaving whole behind it. Individual is closely related with universal and cannot exist without it and the universal is closely related with the Transcendent which expresses Himself through individual and universal. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, "For the particular, the individual can have no self-existence, no truth, no valid force except in so far as it reflects rightly and relates and confirms itself justly to the universal, to the all-being, the all knowledge, the all-will and follows its true drift towards self-realisation and vast delight in itself." So far, Sri Aurobindo agrees with the Asolutists. But, as he goes on to add, "...the universal also has no self-existence, truth or validity except as it expresses the divine Being, Knowledge Will, Power, Delight of Him who surpasses all universe, so much so that with a petty fragment of His being and a single ray of His consciousness, He has created all these worlds."⁴¹ Thus like F.H. Bradley, Sri Aurobindo believes that the universal is individual, but then in the tradition of Vedanta he maintains the self to be equally real and truly individual. In fact, McTaggart's difficulty of calling a unity of selves as one Absolute self is due to the rigidity of the intellect. Mind cannot grasp the possibility of a whole constituted of individual wholes but this is precisely, the law of the consciousness. The complete individual is the cosmic individual, since our individuality can be complete only when we have taken the universe into ourselves and transcended it.

Individual has been often identified with ego and its transcendence misunderstood as the extinction of individuality. But ego is, at best, a practical nucleus for the pragmatic aspect of life. Behind it is the Purusa, the real Individual who determines, supports and yet exceeds it. Thus the temporality of the ego and the eternity of the individual are perfectly compatible.⁴² The multiplicity is real in the Divine. Differentiation is a means to greater unity. God is in man and man is in God. Individual has transcendent within him. He can be one with the Divine and yet enjoy Him in the world. We can have mystic union with God and also love and worship Him as an other. All this seems to be paradoxical to finite reason since reason, as Sri Aurobindo points out, suffers from a three fold error "...the error of making an

unbridgeable gulf between the Absolute and the relative, the error of making too simple and rigid and extending too far the law of contradiction, and the error of conceiving in terms of time, the genesis of things which have their origin and first habitation in the Eternal.”¹⁹ These are the fundamental difficulties which lie at the root of the other theories about the individual.

Double Soul

Like every other principle physical, vital and mental, the soul according to Sri Aurobindo, is also double. There is a surface mind and a subliminal, an outer life and a subliminal force, physical body and subtler material existence. So too we have a double psychic entity in us; the surface desired-soul which works in our vital cravings, emotions, aesthetic faculty and mental seeking for power, knowledge and happiness, and a subliminal psychic entity which is our soul behind the outer form of psychic existence. These external forms are the basis of our egoistic self while the subliminal constitutes our larger true individuality. In the subliminal, the man comes in direct contact with the universal. The thick walls which divide our physical, vital and mental being become only the rarefied medium, at once of separation and communication of our subliminal matter, life and mind with their cosmic forms. But our surface soul is shut off in egoistic walls, in entering which the cosmic Delight is dwarfed, distorted or masked. It is here that we arrive at the triple misinterpretation of the pure essential joy of being in terms of pleasure, pain and indifference.

The real soul, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the “Psychic Being.”⁴³ It is also called the “Caitya Purusa”. At first it is veiled by body, life and mind, but as it grows, it becomes capable of coming forward and dominating them. But, Jivatman or individual spirit is different from psychic being. As Sri Aurobindo says, “The psychic being realises its oneness with the true being, the Jivatman but it does not change into it.”⁴⁴ The Jivatman is the many aspect of the Divine while the psychic being is its evolutionary poise in the earth nature. Sri Aurobindo describes Jivatman as the “multiple Divine manifested here as the individualised self or spirit of the created being.”⁴⁵ This Jivatman is the universal Atman, psychic being is individual soul. Atman is different from inner being. It is self-existent and eternal. Psychic being is within, Jivatman is above, “Jivatman is the individual self the Central

being.¹⁴⁶ It holds together the mental, vital and the physical being through psychic. It is unborn for it does not descend into the being but is above. It integrates the entire consciousness. It does not evolve but presides over the evolution. The psychic being, on the other hand, enters the evolution. It enters the body at birth and goes out of it at death. It can be described as Jivatman entering into birth. Thus psychic being is merely another aspect of central being.

With Vedanta Sri Aurobindo maintains that the real self is beyond time and space, without name and form. It is featureless, relationless, self-blissful, pure conscious existence, self-sufficient and eternally satisfied with pure being. But while this deeper self is unmodified, the outer self is constantly changing. It is by a concentration on this outer self in abstraction that the sceptics reached their conclusions. The advaitins, on the other hand, negated the outer self. Sri Aurobindo steers clear of both these extremes of the negation of self and the negation of Nature. According to him, "The self has two aspects and the results of realising it correspond to these two aspects. One is static, a condition of wide peace, freedom, silence; the silent self is unaffected by any action or experience; it impartially supports them but does not seem to originate them at all, rather to stand back detached or unconcerned, *udasina*. The other aspect is dynamic and that experienced as a cosmic Self or Spirit which not only supports but originates and contains the whole cosmic action – not only that part of it which concerns our physical selves but also all that is beyond it – this world and all other world, the supra-physical as well as physical ranges of the universe. Moreover, we feel it as one in all; but also we feel it as above all, transcendent, surpassing all individual birth or cosmic existence."¹⁴⁷ The integral knowledge of self is the knowledge of both these aspects.

Integral Psychology

Psycho-analysts have done valuable work in the field of unconscious. The unconscious, according to Freud, is dynamic and consists of primitive and infantile experience and impulses. It is a reservoir of repressed desires and memories. It represents the savage, the child and the animal in man. Its ideas are alogical and a-moral. Jung explores a yet wider region. Unconscious, according to him, includes all unconscious psychic-phenomena. It is personal as well as collective. The former includes Freud's

preconscious and unconscious and consists of those experiences that have been forgotten and "repressed" the latter the instincts, the "primordial idea" or "archetypes". It consists of all those psychical types of reaction and tendencies that are common to the race. It is inherited by way of structure.

1. *Sub-Conscient* : What Sri Aurobindo calls the subconscient, corresponds to the unconscious of Freud and Jung. According to him when things are rejected from all other parts of nature, they go either into the environmental consciousness around us and try to return from these or they sink into the subconscient and can come up from there even after long interval. This subconscient strongly resists all changes. It is constantly maintaining and bringing back the inertia, weakness, obscurity and ignorance which afflict the physical mind and vital or the obscure fears, desires, angers of the physical, vital or the illnesses, dullnesses, pains, incapacibilities of the body.

Like Freud's unconscious, this subconscient is the source of dreams. It is the extreme border of the inner being where it meets the Inconscient. In sleep the physical part of man relapses to this region. It is an antechamber of the Inconscient through which its formations rise into our waking or our subliminal being. Sri Aurobindo agrees with Freud's conception of dream-mechanism with the exception of not laying so much emphasis on the role of sex in dream-formation. Dream is a recurrence of repressed impressions, when this subconscious activity sinks back into complete inconscience, we experience dreamless sleep. The dream continues in subconscient states, only the mind does not record it. With its formulations of the impressions of various other levels the subliminal also sometimes comes to the forefront. If we live more deeply, our dreams may come to subliminal from subconscient. Sri Aurobindo believes in the possibility of a coherent knowledge of sleep life.

2. *The Super-Conscient*: The psycho-analysts explain every phenomena, higher or lower, with reference to the unconscious. Thus all religion, art, literature, occult and everything great in human life has been traced to repressed unconscious desires. Religion, according to Freud, is the gratification of the infantile wish for the father originating in Oedipus complex and the primitive consciousness of guilt of the murder of primeval father; art a sublimation of sexual desires and culture and civilization an artificial mechanism of totems and taboos. Adler traces everything to mastery motive and the phenomena of compensation and Jung to the racial unconscious.

The contribution of the psycho-analysts in the field of psychology cannot be easily undervalued but the explanation of the higher and the lower with reference to the same unconscious region, threatens a degeneration of human values. However similar the two may appear, sex and devotion to the Divine are widely divergent phenomena and hence cannot be traced to same regions. The higher phenomena of human life, the art, religious experience, occult, poetry and others do not belong to subconscient but to superconscient planes. As Sri Aurobindo says, "The superconscient, not the sub-conscient, is the true foundation of things... You must know the whole before you know the part and the highest before you can truly know the lowest. That is the promise of the greater psychology awaiting its hour before which these poor gropings will disappear and come to nothing." This is the integral psychology of Sri Aurobindo. It is integral in a double sense. Firstly, it deals with the whole nature of man and secondly, it deals with the relation of the individual planes of consciousness with the cosmic levels. It aims not only at integration of personality, but also its psychicisation and transformation.

Our conscient being, according to integral psychology, is in between the subconscient and the superconscient. These are the two formulations of the same reality. The essence of the former is life, that of the latter is light. In the former, the consciousness is involved in action while in the latter action re-enters light. Intuitive knowledge is common to both. But whereas in the subconscient the intuition manifests in the action, in superconscient it manifests in its true nature as authentic knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo's conception of superconscient is a great corrective to the one-sided theory of the psycho-analysts. This superconscient is the same as the spirit, the God, the oversoul. It is ultimately our own highest, deepest and vastest self. It is the Sacchidananda creating us and the world by his power of divine knowledge and will. Thus integral psychology of Sri Aurobindo is consistent with his integral philosophy. The individual represents the entire cosmos in miniature. The planes of individual consciousness are continuous with their corresponding cosmic planes. Individual is a microcosm in macrocosm. There is one indivisible matter, life and mind in the universe.

3. *The Subliminal*: But perhaps the greatest discovery of the psychology of integral yoga is the subliminal. The subliminal is the meeting place of the involved and evolved consciousness.

It consists of an inner mind, an inner vital being and an inner subtle physical being, larger than our conscious being and nature. Like superconscient, it is also continuous with the external world. It has subtle senses through which it can directly experience the universal in all its levels. It gives us inspirations, intuitions, ideas, will and sense-suggestions and urges to action etc., through trance and deep sleep. It is the seer of inner things and of supra-physical experiences. It is called subliminal not because it is lower but simply because it is behind the veil. Sri Aurobindo ascribes to subliminal, the occult power of telepathy, clairvoyance etc. It can immensely widen the scope of knowledge though for the outer mind, it is difficult to understand its symbols and images. The most important power of the subliminal, which makes it so much useful in yoga, is its widening to come in direct contact with the entire outer world. It can thus directly know the other selves and the outer world. It can have an immediate, ultimate, accurate and spontaneous knowledge of persons, objects, occult powers and intangible energies of world-nature that surround us and impinge upon our personality, physicality, mind-force and life-force. It can even look into future and into the possible course of the subtle world-powers. With the help of the subliminal, the soul can truly control the mental, vital and physical, thus leading to an integral transformation and integral knowledge. Such a knowledge, however, is incomplete till one goes to the other ends of the subliminal, the lower and the higher, the subconscious and the superconscient. The subliminal as opposed to the subconscious, is a secret intraconscient or circumconscient. It is by the gradual widening of this subliminal that the individual tends to become more and more universal, and by the breaking of its walls that man attains cosmic consciousness and thus becomes a true universal-individual.

KARMA AND REBIRTH

Thus the *summum bonum* of integral psychology and integral philosophy is the evolution of man. Hence, Sri Aurobindo does not admit the popular notion of the law of Karma. The idea of petty rewards and punishments cannot appeal to the rational mind. The law, however, is admitted in a general sense that as a man sows, so he reaps. Man is the master of his destiny. According to Sri Aurobindo even the heredity and environment

are determined by the present and past actions of man. Sometimes he also shares the results of his Karmas with others and also *vice versa*, since all existence is continuous. But, there is also a continuity between different births. The being, nature and circumstances of the present life are the results of man's own inner and outer activities. Apparently, sometimes we may not find justice in nature's laws but Sri Aurobindo believes that on the whole the doctrine of Karma is true. Not only the action but even the thoughts and feelings have their corresponding results, though action being the greater part of life, has the greatest amount of result. It is more so since man can exercise a greater control over his actions than on his thoughts and feelings. But, as contrary to fatalism, Sri Aurobindo points out that it is not the law of Karma which determines the destiny of the soul but rather the soul which uses the law as one of its instruments. Karma does not violate spiritual freedom. As we ascend in the chain of evolution the hold of mechanical law is gradually weakened and we arrive at more and more spiritual freedom. As Sri Aurobindo points out, "Prakrti is the field of law and process but the soul, the purusha, is the giver of the sanction, *anumanta*, and even if ordinarily it chooses to remain a witness and concede an automatic sanction, it can be, if it wills, the master of its nature, Iswara"⁴⁸ The soul seeks self-expression and experience in the body and the development of the nature through cosmic experience, so that eventually it may grow out of ignorance. It is this intelligence which guides the law to which the psychic being assents. Being and its will are more important than fate. The nature of the various kinds of energies of the consciousness-force of Spirit makes an exceedingly complex sum of manifold experiences which must be taken into account. The very law of the survival of the fittest is based on justice in Nature that the energy put forward should have in its own kind its fitting reward from her. The simple logic of correlation or the idea of retribution of Karma as a compensation for the injustice of life and Nature, is a feeble basis for the law of Karma. Such a law has no ethical justification, for virtue claims no rewards. In the processes of Nature, there is a lesson of experience. Moral law does not govern Nature. As Sri Aurobindo points out, "All the secret of the circumstances of rebirth centre around one capital need of the soul, the need of growth, the need of experience; that governs the line of its evolution and all the rest is accessory."⁴⁹ This brings us to the problem of rebirth.

Thus Sri Aurobindo rejects the old religious idea of the law of Karma as determining rebirth. His own solution is based on certain fundamental postulates, of which one is that "that which has no end must necessarily have had no beginning."⁵⁰ If the soul is immortal, the law of transmigration is broken, and an immortal soul cannot be the product of mortal matter though by its descent into the latter it may transfer some of its spiritual qualities to it. Secondly, every stage in development presupposes a past. Hence, the personality of the soul presupposes a previous birth for its development. Thirdly, if personality is a result of the mental, vital or physical heredity, then the soul must be a detached something. Now, while real and immortal, the soul should also be eternal and then either it must be changeless self or a timeless Purusa. It must be noted here that the problem of rebirth does not arise in theories as that of the Advaita or Buddhism since whereas in the former all embodiment is a mere illusion and the self is eternally liberated, in the latter there is no permanent self. Rebirth presupposes a static as well as dynamic soul since in the absence of either it is meaningless. Thus rebirth is a necessary corollary in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. It is an indispensable machinery for the working out of a spiritual evolution. Change and evolution is real since ascent is a logical consequence of the descent of the Spirit. Thus spiritual regeneration, release and evolution of soul are real phenomena and so also rebirth. If the Reality is changeless as it is in Mayavada or if it is all change as it is in Buddhism then all these are unreal. In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, on the other hand, Sacchidananda exists in each being and affirms Himself in the individual. "In the individual He discloses His total existence by oneness with all in the universality. In the individual He discloses too His transcendence as the Eternal in whom all the universal unity is founded."⁵¹

Hence, birth and death are not sheer accidents. Human life is not a mere chance-product. It is a term in a graded series through which the secret spirit in the universe develops his purpose gradually, and works it out finally, through the enlarging and ascending individual soul consciousness in the body. As a concentration of the Divine Consciousness the individual has two aspects, a spiritual person and a soul of personality. As the spiritual impersonal Person, he is one with Sacchidananda, while as the soul of personality, his own evolution must follow the law of cosmic evolution. This is the principle underlying the integral yoga. The soul is not a bye-product of body, life or mind and

hence it can pass to the stages higher or lower to them. It may adopt different bodies according to its various manifestations. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "The soul is not bound by the formula of mental humanity: it did not begin with that and will not end with it; it had a pre-human past, it has a superhuman future."¹² The individual soul develops from form to form till it reaches man which is merely a stage to yet higher levels. The transition from lower to higher, from animal to man is too decisive to be reversed. It is possible only where the conversion has not been decisive. Thus the normal law is the recurrence in new human forms. It is more so, since even after assuming human form the work has not been finished, as the soul has to realise yet higher possibilities. When we ascribe a spiritual significance to cosmic evolution, not limited to our own place but a part of a larger universal totality, rebirth becomes an absolute necessity. Again, since our world is not the only world, the soul need not enter the body immediately after death. According to Sri Aurobindo if the experiences of the soul are sufficiently complex to need assimilation and if the mental and vital individuality are sufficiently developed to be attracted by other planes, there must be an interval between birth and birth and passage to other worlds. Birth and death are links in the same process of evolution of soul. After death the soul may stay in same intermediary plane or in some imaginary desire-constructions. It may also pass through physical, vital and mental worlds and even stay there temporarily.

The memory of past lives is of no importance here since the evolutionary purpose of the assimilation and a creative and effective absorption of the essential results of the past energies for the development of personality, does not require it. The absence of memory is no more as disproof of rebirth than it is a denial of our passage in the present life. What is immortal is not the 'I' of the moment but the psychic entity within us. The more spiritual the vital and mental become, the more are their chances of survival since then the walls between the inner and the outer man would break and the mental and vital representatives of the immortal psychic being would govern the life. The physical too can survive only if it is rendered so plastic as to answer every spiritual change. It is not only the physical but the inner need for a better instrument that leads the soul to disregard the body. Thus, in the ultimate analysis, rebirth is not a machinery for the persistent renewal or prolongation of unchanging personality but a means for the evolution of the spiritual being in Nature. The involution of the

Spirit in matter and its consequent evolution is the entire theme of Sri Aurobindo's explanation of the world-enigma.

COSMOLOGY

World and Creation

The universe, according to Sri Aurobindo, is a boundless energy of infinite existence, infinite movement, infinite activity pouring itself in limitless space and eternal Time. With Heraclitus, Sri Aurobindo believes that the world is a creation of Force. This is equally confirmed by science and philosophy, reason and intuition. An infinite Consciounes-Force is the creator, preserver and destroyer of all things. The differences in quality and quantity are simply due to variations in the intensity of the concentration of this Force. It is indivisible and unlike mental consciousness, does not give an equal part of itself, but its whole self to everything at one and the same time "The form and manner and result of the force of action vary infinitely but the eternal, primal, infinite energy is the same in all."⁵³

Nature of Force

Now, this consciousness Force is certainly not the ordinary surface mental consciousness which, as the psychological researches have amply shown, is but an insignificant part of the forces lying hidden in the deeper layers of the unconscious. Consciousness is not mental though man alone is self-conscious. Samkara's analysis of deep sleep, differentiating between the consciousness and the self-consciousness is very valuable here. The latter is only one aspect of the former, which is eternal and exists in all stages, waking, dreaming and sleeping. Epiphenomenalism is now an exploded theory, "Consciousness uses the brain which its upwards strivings have produced, brain has not produced nor does it use the consciousness."⁵⁴ Yogic feats and the modern researches in abnormal psychology and hypnotism prove that the instruments are not indispensable to consciousness.

Again, this consciousness is present everywhere. The experiments of Sir J.C. Bose have proved the existence of consciousness in plants, on a strictly scientific basis and there is every reason to hope that the same may be proved with regard to the metals, only if we could get more refined instruments. All

science is based on the principle of "*Non fit saltus in Natura.*" "Thought", as Sri Aurobindo points out, "has a right to suppose a unity where that unity is confessed by all other classes of phenomena, and in one class only, not denied but merely more concealed than into others."⁵⁵ Anything whose existence is required in the fitness of things, exists, if its existence is neither defined nor affirmed by facts. Pure reason has *a priori* certainty of the ontological status of its conclusions. All knowledge, scientific or metaphysical, can pass from known to unknown. Continuity is not opposed to real difference. A faith in the efficiency of such a leap is behind all speculative thought. This is the justification of Sri Aurobindo's conception of the existence of consciousness in all forms of the force working in the world.

The Triple Manifestation

To Sri Aurobindo, the world is not only Maya and Prakrti but also Lila.⁵⁶ The universe, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the result of the multiple concentration of the supramental consciousness. In Supermind, the creator, there is no distinction of knower, knowledge and known. The creation of physical, vital and mental, out of this equitable concentration is due to centralization, an unequal concentration of consciousness and multiple distribution of force in which there is the beginning of self division or of its phenomenal appearance. First of all the knower holds himself concentrated in knowledge as subject and regards his force of consciousness as is continually proceeding from him into the form of himself, working in it, drawing back in himself and issuing forth again. Next, from this proceeds the division of knower, knowledge and known; self, Maya and becomings of self. After it, there is repetition of conscious soul in every form of himself. Now, so far as the play of the Many is real, it is the creation of supermind. But thence forward the supermind uses mind as an instrument for creation. Hence, pursued a little further, the third status becomes the level of ignorance, that creates absolute divisions in things. Thus there are three general poises or sessions of the world founding consciousness of supermind. "The first founds the inalienable unity of things, the second modifies that unity so as to support the manifestation of the Many in one and one in Many; the third further modifies it so as to support the evolution of a diversified individuality which by the action of ignorance becomes in us at

a lower level the illusion of the separate ego." The first, however, is not the pure unitarian consciousness of Sacchidananda, for that is beyond space-time and only potentially contains the universe. It is, on the other hand, an equal self extension of Sacchidananda, all comprehending, all possessing, all constituting. But that is no individualisation. It is a real play of conscious being. All these three poises are only different ways of dealing with the same truth. The difficulties of the mutually conflicting theories of creation arise only due to their exclusive emphasis on either of these. Sri Aurobindo's conception of triune status of Supermind, establishes a happy synthesis of the theories of Advaita, Visistadvaita and Dvaita. Here, it must be noticed that Sri Aurobindo differentiates between a higher and lower maya, a higher and a lower prakrti. The third status of individuality is not necessarily ignorance though ignorance may be a consequence of it. It is a sort of blissful dualism in unity, which by a further action of the mind, becomes an exclusive dualism of ignorance. The supermind proceeds by a double faculty of comprehensive and apprehensive knowledge. Proceeding from the essential oneness to the resultant multiplicity, it comprehends all things in itself, as itself, the one in its manifold aspects, and apprehends separately all things in itself as objects of its will and knowledge.

The Mother

With Tantra and Sakta philosophy, Sri Aurobindo calls Divine Force, the Mother. She is the Consciousness Force of Sacchidananda and is far above the creation. In her triple poise as Individual, Universal and Transcendent, she mediates between man and nature, creates the universe and links it with the Supreme. There are four leading powers of this Force which Sri Aurobindo describes as the personalities of the Mother, *viz.* Maheswari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati. As he says, "Maheswari lays down the large lines of the world-forces, Mahakali drives their energy and impetus, Mahalakshmi discovers their rhythms and measures, but Mahasaraswati presides over effective combination of forces and unfailling exactitude of result and fulfilment."⁵⁷ Besides these four prominent powers, there are innumerable other powers of innumerable types of complexus of atomic quanta and bare energy. It is the creation of the universal Mother which not only governs from above but also descends here, both impersonally and personally. Thus, Sri Aurobindo brings in the working of the phenomenon of grace.

Lila

The fundamental purpose behind the world, if we may at all ascribe purpose to the perfect being, is the Lila. As the aspect of existence has been emphasised in the concept of Prakṛti so from the point of view of delight the world is the Lila of Sacchidananda. It is the eternal play of the Divine Puruṣa and the Divine Prakṛti, the immortal dance of Siva and Kali. This is how Sri Aurobindo explained the why, the purposeless-purpose, the spontaneous self-manifestation of the Divine. The theories of Maya and Prakṛti fail to explain the bliss aspect of the Divine. At the back of Maya and Prakṛti is the Lila of Supreme. It is not an activity to fulfil some desire since then the Lord shall be imperfect, and yet it is not a meaningless play since this again defiles Sacchidananda. The creator is neither an imperfect individual nor an extra cosmic deity. The world is Lila, the spontaneous overflow of divine consciousness, not by an effort of will but by the very nature of Him.

The Manifestation

The universe is a self-concealment of Sacchidananda to realise itself through its opposite. Sacchidananda is infinite being, consciousness, self sustaining Force, Delight and Unity. In the universe, on the other hand, we find finite souls, limited consciousness, a chaos of atoms, a discordant rhythm of pleasure, pain and indifference and finally a discord of forces and beings. The two represent the different aspects of Him. Universe is the manifestation of the delight of Sacchidananda to realise Himself in its opposite. All creation or becoming is nothing but this self-manifestation.⁵⁸ The play of a child, or the self-expression of a poet are neither purposive in the sense of a plan to achieve some end, hitherto unfulfilled, nor purposeless in the sense of being meaningless. The perfect is not motionless. The motion is in it though it is not motion. It is static as well as dynamic. It is temporal as well as timeless. The Absolute neither creates nor is created in the creation only in the sense of the being becoming form and movement, what it already is in substance and status.⁵⁹ Thus, Sri Aurobindo escapes all the traditional objections against a theory of creation.

Supermind: The Creator

Pantheism truly emphasises the immanence of God, Deism

His transcendence and Theism His personality. But all these views are equally one-sided. God is not only immanent but also transcendent, not only personal but also impersonal. He is in the man as well as in the universe though these do not exhaust Him. Deism posits an unbridgable gulf between God and world. Pantheism identifies the two. Sri Aurobindo maintains the view of the world as manifestation of the Divine consciousness. The material form which appears to be in complete contrast with Divine is the fittest vehicle for manifestation since complete involution is possible only in the extreme opposite. The material form is real, since, "Whatever is created must be of it and in it and what is of the substance of the utterly real must itself be real."⁶⁰

The creation of the finite by the Infinite presupposes a directing faculty, an active power which brings out particular phenomena out of infinite possibilities. This however, is not mind. Berkeley's formula of *esse-est-percipi* does not explain the real world. Logical sequence is not always the true representation of ontological order since logic itself changes with different levels of experiences. From the fact that an object is not known to exist before it is perceived, it does not follow that perception constitutes the essence of things. Again, a universal mind, as T.H. Green suggests, is a misnomer. Mind is merely a mirror which reflects the truths. It can present truths only when it works in close collaboration with actual facts of experience. An infinite mind would create a world full of the defects of mental creation. Hence, in contrast to the Creative Idea of Hegel, Sri Aurobindo prefers to call it "Real Idea" which according to him, is "a power of consciousness force expressive of real-being, born out of real being and partaking of its nature." Sacchidananda is not Absolute Idea. It is not only existence and consciousness but also bliss.

The intermediate link between Sacchidananda and universe, knowledge and ignorance, according to Sri Aurobindo, "is the consciousness because it is a principle superior to mentality and exists, acts and proceeds in the fundamental truth and unity of things, and not like the mind, in their appearances and phenomenal divisions."⁶¹ It is a logical necessity for the transition from Timeless and Spaceless to that which is in Time and Space. It is a knowledge-will or Consciousness-Force. It is the dynamic aspect of Sacchidananda himself. It is the self-knowledge and self-force of God.

According to Sri Aurobindo, what we can be aware of, is first the indivisible one; secondly, the diffusion of all that was concentrated in its unity and, thirdly, its firm self extension in the Truth Consciousness which contains and upholds the diffusion and prevents it from being a real disintegration. This is the Supermind, the Truth-Consciousness, the Real-Idea, which knows itself and all that it becomes. Thus supermind is between the One and Many, the unitary consciousness and the mind. It is fourth to That in its descent and fourth to us in our ascent. Sri Aurobindo arrives at this concept of Supermind by his own direct experience of Truth, consciousness and finally by the reference from the Vedas and Upanisads. Supermind is not supracosmic.⁴² According to Sri Aurobindo the seers before him had no definite idea of Supermind. Krishna, the Lord in Gita was only an Overmind Deity. Thus in the grades of consciousness Supermind is much higher than Brahman of the traditional Vedanta.⁴³

Supermind is the divine gnosis which creates, governs and upholds the worlds. In it there is no conflict between ideas, will or force since all are related to one consciousness. The Supermind is the creator. It is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, all inclusive, all-pervading and the Lord within. In it there is no distinction of knowledge, knower and known. It is the seat of all trinities.

THEORY OF EVOLUTION

The origin, the contingent, the initial and the ultimate reality of all that is in the cosmos, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the triune principle of transcendent and infinite Existence, Consciousness and Bliss which is the nature of Divine Being. Consciousness has two aspects, illuminating and effective, state and power of self-awareness and state and power of self-force, by which Being possesses itself, whether in its static condition or in its dynamic movement. In its creative action, it knows through omnipotent self-consciousness all that is latent within it, produces and governs the universe of its potentialities by an omniscient self energy. This creative action of the All-existent has its nodus in the fourth, the intermediate principle of Supermind, the Real Idea, in which is a divine knowledge, one with self-existence and self-awareness and a substantial will which is in perfect unison with the knowledge, because it is itself in its substance and nature

that self-conscious self-existence, dynamic in illumined action, develop infallibly the movement and form and law of things in accordance with their self-existent Truth and in harmony with the significance of its manifestation.

Mind, life and matter are triple aspects of these higher principles working in subjection to the principle of Ignorance. "Mind is a subordinate power of Supermind which takes its stand in the standpoint of division actually forgetful here of the oneness behind, though able to return to it by reillumination from the supramental; life is similarly a subordinate power of the energy aspect of conscious Ananda, it is Force working out form and the play of conscious energy from the standpoint of division created by Mind; Matter is the form of substance of being which the existence of Sacchidananda assumes when it subjects itself to the phenomenal action of its own consciousness and force."⁶⁴

1. Matter too is Brahman : Berkeley's doctrine of *esse-est-percipi*, Kant's epistemological analysis or Bergson's concept of platonisation do not prove that matter is a mental creation. Epistemological priority of mind is no guarantee for ontological priority. The earth existed long before there was mind to perceive it. Due to the same reasons again, matter is not a creation of universal mind. But since the universe is created by consciousness-force, as Sri Aurobindo has maintained, substance of matter is only form of spirit. It is conceptive self extension of being which works itself out in the universe as substance or object of consciousness and with Cosmic mind and life. In their creative action, represented through atomic division and aggregation, Spirit is the soul of matter, matter is the body of Spirit, yet matter has also certain fundamental characteristics in contrast to Spirit. Firstly, it is the culmination of bondage to mechanical law, a colossal inertia, which opposes all that seeks to liberate itself. And finally, it is the culmination of the principle of division and struggle. Matter is the last stage known to us in the progress of pure substance towards a basis of Cosmic relation in which the first word is not spirit but form. And if there is an ascending series in the scale of substance from matter to spirit, it must be marked by a progressive diminution of the characteristics which will lead us to the formula of pure spiritual self extension. Between the two poles of matter and spirit, form and essence, ignorance and knowledge, there is a possibility of infinite gradation. Even within

the matter, there is an ascending series which leads us from the more to the less dense, from gross to the more subtle.

2. Life : Life, according to Sri Aurobindo, "is a form of the one Cosmic Energy, a dynamic movement or current of it, positive and negative, a constant act or play of the force which builds up forms, energises them by an unceasing process of disintegration and renewal of their substance."⁶⁵ Disintegration and renewal, status and change, birth and death, all are the processes of the same life. "All renews itself, nothing perishes," is the law of the conservation of energy. Life is everywhere, secret or manifest, organised or elemental, involved or evolved. It is universal, all pervading and imperishable, only its forms and organisations differ. Each form is constantly taking into itself and giving out again the breath and energy of the common force. There is no essential difference between the life in plant, animal or man. Everywhere we see the same birth, growth and death; nutrition, productiveness and sterility; sleep and waking; energy and depression of life dynamisms; the passage from infancy to maturity and reaction to stimuli. The force is fundamentally the Chit-Tapas or Chit-Sakti of the Vedanta. It manifests itself as nervous energy full of sub-mental sensation in the plant, as desire-sense and desire-will in the primary animal forms, as self-conscious sense and form in the developing animal and as mental will or knowledge in man.

3. The Mind : Mind in its essence is a consciousness which measures, limits, cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole and contains them as if each were a separate integer. It conceives, perceives, senses things as if rigidly cut out from a background or a mass and employs them as fixed units of the material given to it for creation or possession. If it goes beyond and tries to conceive a real whole, it loses itself in a foreign element, where it can neither perceive nor conceive nor sense. Mind is an instrument of ignorance but a subordinate process of delimitation. Hence, the mind is only a subordinate and not really a separate working of the Real-Idea.

But mind takes up the work to continue and not to complete it. Thus, as against the theories of Spencer and Darwin, Sri Aurobindo's is an open evolution like that of Bergson and Alexander. The impetus, however, now becomes more rapid and smooth since as contrasted to the previous evolution in ignorance, it progresses in knowledge to higher and higher heights till it

may reach the Sacchidananda. The vast difference between the nature of mind and Supermind presupposes grades between them, otherwise all ascent or descent is highly improbable. There are, of course, radical changes in the transition from matter to life and life to mind, yet due to slow graduations they are rendered conceivable and feasible. The hiatus between Mind and Supermind is greater. As we rise beyond Mind, there takes place a large dynamic descent of light, knowledge, power, bliss of other supernormal energies into our self of silence.

4. Higher Mind : Higher Mind is a mind of large clarity of spirit, a luminous thought-Mind, a mind of spiritual conceptual knowledge. "An all awareness emerging from the original identity carrying the truths, the identity held in itself, conceiving swiftly, victoriously, multitudinously formulating and by self-power of the idea effectually realising its conceptions, is the character of this greater mind of knowledge."⁶⁶ In Higher Mind what we know is the totality of things though not an integral knowledge. It is the self-revelation of an eternal knowledge. It can freely express itself in single idea but its most characteristic movement is a mass ideation, a system or totality of truth-seeing at a single view. The relations of idea with idea, of truth with truth are not established by logic, but pre-exist and emerge already self seen in the integral whole. Besides the cognitive aspect, we have the volitional as well as the effective aspect of the Higher Mind. It purifies, delivers and creates through knowledge. Heart and life become conscious of the idea and respond to its dynamisms. Feelings, will and actions become the vibrations of this higher wisdom. The idea works even in the body so that the potent thought or will of health replaces its faith in illness and its consent to illness, or the idea of strength calls in the substance, power, motion, vibration of strength. The idea generates force-form proper to it and imposes it on our mind, life and matter.

5. Illumined Mind : The descent of the Higher Mind does not integrate but only prepares the base for the descent of a yet higher, the Illumined Mind. This is a mind of spiritual light, a luminous inner force and power which effects almost a violent impetus of rapid transformation in comparison with the slow and deliberate process of the Higher Mind. Thought is here subordinated to vision which catches the truth itself and not merely its image. "As the Higher Mind brings a greater consciousness into the being through the spiritual idea and its power of truth so the Illumined mind brings in a still greater

consciousness through a Truth-sight and Truth-light and its seeing and seizing power."⁶⁷ As Higher Mind transforms and fulfils the thought so the Illumined Mind transforms and fulfils vision. It can effect a more powerful and dynamic integration. It brings a spiritual insight into the heart and a spiritual light and energy into its feeling and emotion. It imparts to the life-force a spiritual urge that dynamises the action and exalts life movements. It infuses into the senses a direct and total power of spiritual sensation so that our vital and physical being can contact the Divine in all things. It throws a transforming light on the physical mind, which breaks its limitations, inertia, narrow power and doubts.

6. Intuitive Mind : Both Higher Mind and Illumined Mind depend for their authority on a yet higher power, the Intuitive Mind. It does not work through cognition or vision but through intuition which we have elaborately described earlier. It transforms not only mind but also heart, life, senses and even body. It changes the whole consciousness into the stuff of intuition. It recasts the life and body in the light and power of truth.

7. Overmind : Beyond Intuitive Mind is the Overmind which is the Super-mind's delegate to the Ignorance. A line divides Overmind, there is no integrity of the Supermind and yet it embraces the totality. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "What to the mental reason are irreconcilable differences present themselves to the Overmind intelligence as co-existent correlatives; what to the mental reason are contraries are to Overmind intelligence complementaries."⁶⁸ It proceeds through an illimitable completion and combination of the powers and aspects of the integral and indivisible all-comprehending unity. Thus in Overmind we have the origin of the cleavage and yet the superstructure is still founded on the basis of an implicit underlying unity. All possibilities of combination and relation between the separated powers and aspects are freely organised here. Thus, it gives Sacchidananda the character of a teeming of infinite possibilities which can be developed into a number of worlds thrown together into one world.

Again, as contrasted with mind, Overmind Consciousness is global in its cognition and can hold any number of seemingly fundamental differences together in a reconciling vision. The Overmind is a sort of inferior Supermind although it is concerned more with pragmatic truth than with absolutes, it is more global than integral. In Overmind alone we realise a true harmony of

the whole, which is not possible to mind. In contrast to mental Maya of Ignorance, the Overmental Maya is of knowledge. The cosmic mind of this plane comprehends its own unity through intellect and not through experiences. There is no interpenetration in its unity but co-existence. It is a partial knowledge and not a true and integral self and whole knowledge. And yet as contrasted to human mind, here remains harmony, a power of communication and mutuality and a free play of mentality. Its ignorance is limitative but not necessarily falsificative.

The change brought through Intuitive Mind is completed in Overmental descent. This requires not only vertical but also horizontal expansion of consciousness. At this level thought, feeling and emotion all become cosmic, all embracing, catholic, infinite and spiritual. It takes up all that is in the three steps below it and raises their characteristic workings to their highest and largest power, adding to them a universal wideness of consciousness and force, a harmonious concert of knowledge, a more manifold delight of being. But overmind cannot transform the entire Nature nor does it guarantee against the downward pull of inconscience. Hence to achieve a complete integral transformation of the entire nature the descent of Supermind is imperative.

Not a Rigid Scheme

This, however, is not a clear cut and logical account of the spiritual aspect since, "When the higher descends into the lower consciousness, it alters the lower but it is also modified and diminished by it when the lower ascends, it is sublimated but at the same time qualifies the sublimating substance and power."⁶⁹ Thus, in spite of the fact that ascent is only possible when the lower level is completely integrated Nature is not a logical series, like Hegelian dialectic, but a totality of ascending powers which interpenetrate and effect each other. Hence, different intermediate forces and beings are created and complete integration under any one power becomes difficult. Sri Aurobindo describes overmind by the analogies of an ascending ocean a tide or a mounting flux the leading fringe of which touches the higher degrees of cliff or hill while the rest is still below, or "an army advancing as columns which annexes new ground while the main body is still behind in a territory over-run but too large to be effectively occupied so that there has to be a frequent halt and partial return to the traversed area for consolidation and assurance of the hold on the

occupied country and assimilation of its people"⁷⁰ Hence, at each stage the higher parts of the nature may be provisionally but incompletely organised in the new consciousness while the lower are in a state of flux. Higher level appears when the lower is sufficiently integrated for the emergence, yet it is only after the emergence of the higher and their influence that the lower is perfectly organised. This intricate action takes place because each descending power by its intensity of pressure on the nature uplifts it to higher levels. Again, the process is further complicated due to the very nature of integration which requires not only ascent but also descent. This descent is resisted and distorted by the lower nature and hence the higher does not wait for the complete transformation of the first level of descent but goes on descending, partially transforming all so that we find that "Nothing is accomplished until all is accomplished."⁷¹ Finally, in an individual evolution there is further complexity due to the fact that all the levels of consciousness are not transformed equally and simultaneously, since the inner changes more readily than the outer. Again, a perfect transformation of man is possible, when not only the inner but the outer, the circumconscient also should be spiritualised. This is not possible unless the entire **Nature is** spiritualised since the circumconscient is constituted **not** only by us but also by the environments. But once the supramental principle and its cosmic operation, are established permanently the intervening powers of Overmind and Spiritual Mind can found themselves securely upon it and reach their own perfection. They would become in the earth existence a hierarchy of states of consciousness rising out of mind and physical life to the supreme spiritual level. This is what all religions have dreamt as the kingdom of heaven upon earth.

The two Hemispheres

The entire chain of evolution is divided into two hemispheres, the higher and the lower. A line is drawn between the higher half of the universe of consciousness (Parardha), and the lower half (Aparardha). The higher half is constituted of Sat, Chit, Ananda, Mahas (the Supramental), the lower half of mind, life and matter. This line is the intermediary Overmind which though luminous itself, keeps from us the full indivisible supramental light. Thus, the two hemispheres meet at the junction of mind and Supermind. The rending of this veil, the ascent of the lower into higher is the crux of the problem.

Eternity and Continuity

Evolution, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not a fact in time. The divine does not descend in matter at a particular date. It is eternal and seen as temporal succession only due to the inherent limitation of the intellect. "The emergence, the movement from the Immutable is an eternal phenomenon and it is only because we cannot conceive it in the beginningless, endless, ever new moment which is the eternity of the Timeless that our notions and perceptions are compelled to place it in a temporal eternity of successive duration to which are attached the ideas of an always recurrent beginning, middle and end."⁷²

The evolution is continuous. It always has a past, a present and a future till spirit is completely manifested. Sacchidananda is Himself behind everything and hence where one principle is manifest in cosmos, there all the rest must be not only present and passively latent but secretly at work. The progress is not by leaps and gaps. The manifestation of the spirit is a complex web in which all the others enter as the elements of the spiritual whole. Thus everyone is involved in each. As matter is the last word of the descent so it is also the first word of the ascent. Whatever is involved must evolve. As the power of all these planes, worlds, grades, degrees are involved in material existence, so they are all capable of evolution out of it.

Ascent and Descent

The impetus in evolution is two-fold, the nîsus from below and the pressure from above. Thus the purpose of deliverance is helped by the pressure of the supramental planes on the material, compelling it to evolve out of it, their involved principles and powers. When the evolution of the lower comes to a point suitable for the emergence of the higher, there is a pressure from superior levels, a descent which assists the lower in its ascent to a higher level. This emergence of higher levels gives the lower a new value. This is not possible in mechanistic theories since there the lower planes can only passively receive and not turn contacts into values. This heightening, deepening, subtler, finer and richer intensification of all parts is the way of the Spirit and hence not possible in the theories of material, vital or mental evolution.

The Why of Evolution

Sri Aurobindo explains the why of evolution in terms of the delight of Sacchidananda. Brahman manifests in the world to enjoy its self manifestation in the figures of relative and phenomenal consciousness. "Brahman is in this world to represent itself in the values of life."⁷³ This question of why doesn't arise in the theories of Alexander, Bergson, Samkhya or Darwin, where the original matrix is conceived to be non-inherent nature of the primordial stuff. But, as soon as we accept with Aurobindo, the existence as conscious Being the question arises as to why at all He manifests Himself. Now, a conscious existence presupposes an inherent freedom to manifest at will. Delight can be the only adequate reason for its indulgence in movement and form. According to Sri Aurobindo, "All illimitableness, all infirmity, all absoluteness is pure delight."⁷⁴ All things are terms for Sacchidananda. The term delight does not signify what we understand by pleasure or happiness, whose enjoyer is essentially limited and imperfect. Delight of being is universal, illimitable, self-existence and not dependent on particular causes. It is the background of all backgrounds from which pleasure, pain and other more neutral experiences emerge. When delight of being is seeking to realise itself as delight of becoming, it moves in the movement of force and itself takes different forms of movement, of which pleasure and pain are positive and negative currents. Subconscious in matter, superconscious beyond mind, this delight seeks to realise itself in life and mind by emergence in the becoming. Its first phenomena are dual and impure. They move between the poles of pleasure and pain. But it aims at its self-revelation in the purity of a supreme delight of being which is self-existence and independent of objects and causes. Just as Sacchidananda moves towards the realisation of universal existence in the individual and of the form exceeding consciousness in body and mind, so it moves towards the realisation of universal self-existence and objectless delight in the flux of particular experience and objects. Delight is the reason of that clinging to existence, that overmastering will to be, which is found in the instinct of self-preservation, and the imperishability of matter. On the mental plane, it manifests as the sense of immortality, which attends the formed existence through all its phases of self-destruction in only a reverse form. "Delight is existence, Delight is the secret of creation. Delight is the root of birth. Delight is the cause of

remaining in existence. Delight is the end of birth and that into which creation ceases.”⁷⁵ The delight of existence is at first self-gathered, absorbed, subconscious in the basis of the physical universe; then emergent in a great mass of natural movement which is not yet what we call the triple vibration of pain, pleasure and indifference originating from the limitation of the force of consciousness in the form and from its exposure to shocks of the universal Force which it finds alien to it and out of harmony with its own measure and standard. Finally, there is the conscious emergence of the full Sacchidananda in its creations by universality, by equality, by self-possession and conquest of Nature.

EVIL, PAIN, ERROR AND FALSEHOOD

Such a hypothesis is, however challenged by the existence of evil, pain, error and falsehood. Can the Divine create evil and falsehood in His pure delight? If yes then, how is He different from the Devil? If no, then how these phenomena are to be explained? When all this is Divine, then He himself must be the cause of all this. But then, how is Deity on the side of goodness? The problem cannot be avoided by simply calling it an inexplicable mystery since God is knowledge. The imposition of a Beelzebub, creating all this in rivalry to God would make the Divine finite and impotent.

In contrast to the extreme views of an absolute denial of evil or a complete affirmation of it, Sri Aurobindo accepts the reality of evil, without allowing it any absolute status. He looks to this problem from three aspects, *viz.*, from the side of the Absolute, world and individual respectively. Falsehood and evil are the creations of ignorance and hence as such have no place in Supreme Nature which is perfect knowledge. As soon as ignorance gives place to knowledge, evil and falsehood disappear. So far as knowledge is authentic it is true since as Sri Aurobindo says, “Authenticity is a first step towards absoluteness.”⁷⁶ Human values like truth and error, good and evil are relative and uncertain. This is all due to intermixture of true and wrong consciousness, the one producing good and the other evil. In the presence of the divine force of integral Being, even the physical pain and suffering shall not exist. Thus, good and evil are relative and uncertain. This is all due to intermixture of true and wrong consciousness, the one producing good and the other evil. In the presence of the

divine force of integral Being, even the physical pain and suffering shall not exist. Thus, good and evil are not mutually interdependent any more than light and darkness, though the latter nevertheless depends on the former. Where there is unity and mutuality of consciousness these phenomena of error, evil and falsehood do not exist even in multiplicity and diversity. Hence, Sri Aurobindo says, "There is, therefore, no authentic inevitable cosmicity of falsehood and evil even as there is no absoluteness; they are circumstances or results that arise only at a certain stage when separativeness culminates in opposition and ignorance in a primitive consciousness of knowledge and a resultant wrong consciousness and wrong knowledge with its content of wrong will, wrong action and wrong reaction."⁷⁷

Origin of these phenomena

Now, at what stage these contraries arise in cosmic manifestation? To what level of existence do they belong? Are these inevitable in creation? Sri Aurobindo endorses the ancient belief that there are corresponding powers, beings and forces behind these contraries. Modern developments in science do not challenge this possibility. Man can be directly aware of them by going deep in his subliminal. They have often a tremendous influence. But this immeasurableness cannot be an argument to prove their absoluteness. Absolute evil and pain defeat their own purpose. Either they get extinguished or turn into their opposites. As Sri Aurobindo points out, "self-existence in essence or by an eternal inherence in the self-existent, is the condition of absoluteness, error, falsehood, evil, which are cosmic powers but relative in their nature not absolute since they depend for existence on the perversion or contradiction of their opposites and are not like truth and self-existent absolute, inherent aspects of the supreme self-existent." Thus, these are not cosmic principles but originate only in the return of the Inconscience towards consciousness.

Evil, however, does not belong to matter, Nature has no place for moral values. It is only by the contact of conscious beings and for them alone that values come into existence. The duality begins with conscious life and emerges fully with the development of mind in life. The vital mind, the mind of desire and sensation, is the creator of the sense and fact of evil. The moral values again, are purely human, though they are not by

that means unreal. Ethics is an indispensable step in the process of evolutionary Nature.

Thus the first source of good and evil is the vital. This is the basis of the hedonistic theories in ethics; psychological, evolutionary or ethical. This again may be egoistic or altruistic, individual or social. Besides vital, we may get valuations based on the thinking mind which give rise to such theories as that of rationalism, intuitionism, moral sense, aesthetic sense and the law of Karma, etc. Others support ethics on religious basis. Behind all these theories, there is a deeper feeling variously named as conscience, inner voice, or psychic being. The real sanction according to Sri Aurobindo is inward, spiritual and psychic.⁷⁸

The phenomena of evil and falsehood come into existence into the surface emergence of the mental and vital consciousness out of the Inconscience. This is determined by two-fold conditions. Firstly, the inner force has to impose itself on the outer for the emergence of mental through the difficult medium of overlying layer of nescience. Then, emerges life which is in constant conflict with the environment for its survival and as the mind grows it takes the form of a constantly self-affirming mental, vital and physical ego. Consciousness, at first sight, appears to be entirely alien to matter, but still the facts of animal and human life lead us to the conclusion, that there is a concealed consciousness in things which gradually comes to the surface. The individual animal, at first, gets knowledge through instincts and then by perception and sensation. This is only possible when there is same underlying subliminal consciousness behind subject and object. It is hence that the secret consciousness is rendered into surface sensation and perception, the secret force into surface impulse. If this subliminal may come to the surface, a direct knowledge is possible but it does not happen because of the pressure of the inconscience and also because the evolutionary purpose is to develop slowly through an imperfect but growing surface awareness. By a gradual evolution, the life as well as mind attain their characteristic nature separating it from other elements. But with this evolution the possibility of the error also grows. This is restricted only so long as intuition plays a dominant role. But, this is not the actual case since in nature, the Inconscience gradually comes to ignorance and ignorance grows to knowledge through partial knowledge. Hence, the mental stage is a necessary step. There is a double source of error in the surface mind's distorting the intuition

received from inner consciousness and again, the knowledge based on that is further erroneous. Hence, error is a necessary step in the transition from ignorance to knowledge. To shut out error is only possible if we limit the chances of the acquisition of knowledge. Error does not necessarily amount to falsehood. It may, on the other hand, open to fresh knowledge in unexpected directions. The egocentrism of the mind is another source of falsehood and error. The limitation due to the inherent nature of the individual is often a source of error and falsehood. This is true not only in the field of cognition but also of feeling and will. A wrong consciousness is created out of ignorance and leads to wrong actions. In the effectuations of Nature, when this is replaced by the true vital being the life force becomes a true servant of soul.

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

The Role of Reason in Religious Experience

Sri Aurobindo defines true religion as "the following of the spiritual impulse in its fullness," and spirituality as "the attempt to know and live in the highest self, the divine, the all embracing unity and to raise life in all its parts to the divinest possible values."⁷⁹ Thus coherence in spiritual experience is the criterion of the truth of religious experience. It may be pointed out that coherence is a principle of reason and Sri Aurobindo admits that there is always an element of reason in the harmony of spirit. The application of intellectual reason to religious experiences will only breed misunderstandings. The questionings of the intellect about the validity of religious experience are simply based on ignorance of this particular phenomenon. The demand for physical proof of the existence of God or the efficacy of religion is quite contrary to its outward machinery of creed, cult, ceremony and symbol, the inmost essence of religion, is the search and finding of God. The object of religion is achieved through self-transcendence, absolute consecration, aspiration and experience, revelation, inspiration and intuition etc. The delight of God-realisation, is ineffable. The devotee has to surrender his entire being. The way of religion is absolute. "Its work is a sincere living out of the true and intimate relations between man and God, relations of unity, relations of difference, relations of an illuminated knowledge, an ecstatic love and delight, an absolute surrender and service, a casting of every part of our existence out of its normal status

into an uprush of man towards the Divine and descent of the Divine into man."⁸⁰

Sri Aurobindo does not reject reason in the field of religion but only limits and subordinates it. Reason cannot prescribe laws to religious experience, divine love, delight or action of the devotee. Its sole legitimate sphere is to explain the truths, the experiences, the laws of our supra-rational and spiritual existence in our language. Sri Aurobindo emphatically supports the need of a philosophy of religion. Religious truths must be presented in an intellectual form.

As against the supra-rational, reason has its supremacy in the field of infra-rational. This is the region of instincts, impulses, sensations, crude emotions and vital activities. Religion includes the lower nature and specially in totemism, nature-worship, fetish-worship and other primitive types of religions, it is the satisfaction of this lower nature which is mostly sought. In this early stage of religious development, there is much impurity, ignorance and superstition. It is here that reason can intervene to enlighten, purify and rationalise the play of instincts and impulses. But, in its endeavor to purify the infra-rational aspect of religion, reason sometimes tries to eliminate it absolutely. The so-called reformed religions often lack in wealth of spirituality, fullness of emotion and are impoverished, bare and cold. The sources of religious experiences are below or above. The life breath of religion is its supra-rational faith and infra-rational elements. No religion lives by its reasonings. Again, religion is not only personal but also communal and hence it must appeal to the whole being, not only to the supra-rational parts but also to all the others.⁸¹

Mysticism and Anti-Intellectualism

Though Sri Aurobindo, no less than Hegelians, emphatically asserts the place of reason in religion, he also clearly distinguishes between thought and spirit, which Hegel had identified. Every kind of phenomena requires a particular method to know it and different categories should be applied to explain different phenomena. Thus, like Pringle Pattison, Sri Aurobindo deplors the attempts of the naturalists to explain religious experience with the categories applied to other phenomena. Religion is rational and yet much more and a certain portion of this 'more' always defies intellectual analysis. This is the mystic element in all religions.

With mysticism, Sri Aurobindo has great sympathy. He strongly criticises the anti-mystic tendency characteristic of many modern psychologists. Down right denial is not better than dogmatic assertion. Nothing can be achieved without faith, though faith must be based on reason. The mystic method, must be subjective by the very nature of the end it seeks to achieve. It is not relevant to appeal to the widely different experiences of the mystics as a proof of their falsehood, since this many-sidedness is the sign of the approach of the soul to a living reality and not to a rigid mental construction. Thus, Sri Aurobindo is a mystic, if by mysticism we mean a first hand spiritual realisation of God. But taken in the sense of *via negativa*, his is not a mysticism either in ends or in means. In mysticism, according to Miss Evelyn Underhill, "Not to know about but to be is the mark of the real practitioner."⁸² Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, does not bifurcate between knowing and being. Again, mysticism, according to the conclusion of "*Enneads*" is "a flight of the alone to the alone."⁸³ According to Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, God is realised in cosmic liberation not only in the liberation of the individual, as the mystics wrongly suppose. Thus, Sri Aurobindo criticises only the extremist aspect of mysticism. He places it on more philosophical grounds and also universalises it. According to Prof. K.A. Hakim, "He expounds mysticism which seeks not to mystify but to clarify."⁸⁴ We may add that he not only clarifies but also universalises it.

Evolution of Religion

Every form of religion, according to Sri Aurobindo, manifests a certain truth peculiar to its own stage. In its evolution, religion passed through several stages. Everything in Nature, starts in inconscience, gradually advances with faltering steps through ignorance, retardations and instinctive oppositions and finally exhibits some partial intense activities and the more vivid forms. It is at this stage, that there is a radical change, a decisive emergence which when heightened, widened and subtilised, reaches a truth which cannot be explained in terms of the earlier forms. Hence the primitive beginning in totemism, nature-worship and fetishism, etc., is no argument to disprove the truth of religion. As Sri Aurobindo points out, "This chequered history belongs to all human efforts and if it were to count against the truth and necessity of every other line of human endeavour, against all

man's action, his ideals, his thought, his art, his science.'⁸⁵ Sri Aurobindo does not deny the defects that have entered religion making it rigid, sterile and even positively harmful to mankind, but he clearly distinguishes between the false and true aspects of religion, between religion and what he calls religionism. Thus, as he says, "True religion is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and laws of the spirit. Religionism, on the contrary, entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation of the lower members or lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed and rigid moral code, on some religio-political or religio-social system."⁸⁶ Religionism must be substituted by true religion, whose work for man is to lead him towards the Divine, to formulate all that he has yet achieved in that direction and to give to each human being, a way of nearing the Truth, according to his capacities.

When all the various tendencies became more pronounced and even separate and free from one another, the first infra-rational stage gradually passed into rational. As the intellectual elements increased, everything was subordinated to creed, rituals and institutions. This tendency was led to its absurdity, in a complete denial of whatever is occult, supra-physical and religious. But, side by side with this, there was another tendency which tried to liberate the secret spiritual element and to place it on a universal scale. This spiritual element was again developed in its exoteric and esoteric forms, the intensive method of religion. The amalgam of these two led to the formation of cults, creeds and dogmas. Thus evolved the great religions, which had the spiritual truth as their kernal that persisted only so long as it was occasionally renewed. These great religions again, developed two forms, catholic and protestant, the one a tendency towards some conservation of the original plastic character of religion, its many-sided appeal to the whole nature of human being, the other disruptive of this catholicity and insistent on a pure reliance on belief, worship and conduct simplified so as to make a quick and ready appeal to the common reason, heart and will. It was this later tendency which led to excessive rationalism, already referred, which taken to its extreme, excludes all spiritual elements from religion, leaving the dry intellectual alone, a poor substitute to living religions.

In this long process of the evolution of religion, each religion has helped mankind. Paganism has increased the light of beauty, the largeness and height of man's life, and aimed at a many-sided perfection. Buddhism has shown him a nobler way to be wiser, gentler and purer. Judaism and Islam have shown him how to be religiously faithful in action and zealously devoted to God. Hinduism has opened to him the largest and profoundest spiritual possibilities.⁸⁷ All the religions have saved a number of souls, but what is needed to spiritualise mankind, is not cult and creed but a sustained and all comprehending effort at spiritual self evolution. With J.H. Leuba, S. Freud and others Sri Aurobindo would admit that religion satisfies the fundamental needs of human life, but he points out to a wider purpose of Nature behind these narrow objects. It seeks not only to heighten but also to widen, not only evolution but also integration, not only fulfilment of physical, vital and mental but also an uplift of all into spiritual, a psychicization, spiritualization and unity with Sacchidananda.

Integral View of Religion

This leads Sri Aurobindo to an integral view of religion. As he points out, "A religion which is itself a congeries of religions and which at the same time provides each man with his own turn of inner experience, would be the most in consonance with this purpose of Nature: it would be a rich nursery of spiritual growth and flowering, a vast multiform school of soul's discipline, endeavours, self-realisation."⁸⁸ A harmony between various religions is necessary but not the abolition of variety since a diversity in oneness is the law of the manifestation of the Spirit in Nature.

Thus, Sri Aurobindo's approach to religion is integral. As a philosopher of religion, he finds out the limits of reason in this particular field of human experience and also judges its significance in the entire scheme of Nature. With Hegelians he traces evolution in religion and accepts the value of reason to purge religion of its infra-rational elements but unlike them he subordinates reason to supra-rational. With historians like Prof. Toynbee, he would admit the importance of religion in human history and with psycho-analysts, the play of infra-rational elements in religion. But, by tracing the supra-conscious influences in it, he clarifies a grave confusion. Like pragmatists, he admits the value of religion in life, but in consistency with his '*weltanschauung*' he emphasises

the wider purposes of life in Nature.

Religion is a great intercessor between spirit and Nature. Its real business is to prepare man's mind and bodily existence for the advent of spiritual light. With Bradley, Sri Aurobindo points out to the discrepancy which religion leaves between the worshipper and the worshipped, but by its culmination in yoga he does not mean its abolition but its fulfilment. Religion fails to achieve its purpose since it falls short of the complete union, psychicization, transformation and integration. These, on the other hand, are the very essence of Yoga. Hence religion, to achieve its purposes, must culminate in Yoga. It is more so, since as Sri Aurobindo points out, "Spiritual Experience is the final aim and achievement of religion, its sky and summit."⁸⁹ Philosophy of religion should be based on a total view of Reality, deciding the value of religion in the entire scheme of Nature. In the hierarchy of values, religion stands higher than morality but stops short of complete spirituality. Philosophy and religion, head and heart, thought and emotion are equally satisfied, integrated and transformed in spiritual experience. Religion is a necessary step between mind and spirit but Yoga is indispensable to make its faith a living realisation."⁹⁰

THE SUMMUM BONUM

Evolution is the key to understand the purpose of individual and cosmic nature. The evolutionary purpose is determined by the very nature of creation. Spirit is involved in matter for the pure delight of manifestation and when that purpose is achieved, it must, by its very inherent teleology, evolve again to its original form. This is clearly exhibited by the process of evolution in Nature. Leibnitz's monadology expresses this fact though it misses the universal. There is no warrant to stop at the waking monads, since if the force of Being is one with it, and if evolution presupposes involution, the process should stop only when the force has realised Being. Otherwise, one is left in a perpetual oscillation. The consciousness force goes on evolving through matter, life and mind and the *nisus* must lead to Supermind. Not philosophy but Yoga is the true *summum bonum*. As Sri Aurobindo says, "To be, not to know, is the object of manifestation; knowledge is only an instrumentation of the operative consciousness of being."⁹¹ To be and to be fully is the aim of man and Nature. To be fully means to be wholly and integrally aware of oneself. To be fully

is to have the intrinsic and integral force of one's being. Lastly, to be fully is to have the full delight of being. Thus to be fully means to realise the hidden existence, consciousness and bliss. Again, to be fully is to be universally, since all being is one, and finally, to be universally, one must be also transcendently.⁹² Man will have to transcend the physical, vital and mental levels. Then alone, the spirit will control the lower nature. Individual and universal consciousness can find its fullness only by transcendence. Man's evolution is no longer an evolution in ignorance and through inconscience. It is an evolution from knowledge to fullness of Superconscience.

The Purpose in Nature

This evolution has a two-fold process, visible and invisible, physical and spiritual, the cosmic and individual. Sri Aurobindo believes in teleology in Nature. It is the urge of an intrinsic Truth-necessity, conscious in the indwelling Spirit. The game too has its object. Lila is not without purpose. Ananda does not exclude the working of the inherent truth. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "A manifestation of the greater powers of Existence, till the whole being itself is manifest in the material world in the terms of a higher, a spiritual creation may be considered as the teleology of evolution."⁹³ Whatever Spengler and others might say, evolution has definitely moved towards more and more complexity, plasticity, depth and width in all walks of existence and values. Even the falls are merely the downward curves of spiral. The stress of spirituality in human race is a sign of the cultural destiny of man. Sri Aurobindo does not suggest the evolution *en-bloc*. After the human mind has reached a particular stage, there is a possibility of a gradual evolution to gnostic level. The entire being of man, physical, vital and mental, must be transformed. But the greatest change is the change of consciousness. In the psychic being of man, there is an earlier stage but through the growth of consciousness, that evolution will proceed in man. The evolution, however, is always spiritual. It is only in earlier stages that its spiritual nature is obscured due to inconscience. Man should consciously help Nature in her own spiritual and physical evolution and transformation. In Spirit, there is a tendency to rise from lower to higher, but the tendency to integrate and divinise the lower is equally fundamental. If man cannot rise to that level, he should give place to another species. But if he can, then there is no reason why he should not. In Nature, the essence is pre-

existent to the apparent cause and emerges only at the right moment. Spirit is the final evolutionary emergence because it is the original involutionary factor.

Nature of Spirituality

Spirituality is the natural light and inherent force of the Spirit. It is neither moral sense, religious fervor, nor idealism nor a compound of all these. It is different from cognition, conation or will. It is the authentic power of the Spirit and hence beyond the grasp of intellect. It is mystic, occult and esoteric. As a free choice of our being it permeates the whole consciousness and illumines and widens it. It liberates and transforms the whole being. It is the culmination of all religions. It brings us in direct touch with the Divine. It is the essential and universal truth of existence, the one immortal self of all beings. Body, life and mind are its instruments of self-expression in matter. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self and soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be That, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits our own being also, to be in communion with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new nature." Thus, spirituality is a dynamis of a higher luminous and infinite or the opening of a door to Divine, which alone can fulfil the end sought by all science, ethics, religion and philosophy. It is truly realised in Yoga.

Double Evolution of Spirit

The consciousness force seeks a double evolution of the outer nature and also an evolution of the inner being. The heavy inertia and persistence of the body, the turbid passions of the life and the doubts and denials of the mind are so intolerable that often the spirit seeks to mortify the body, reject the life and silence the mind and to be separate from Nature to seek its own salvation. This leads to asceticism, illusionism and escapism. Thus, here is a dual tendency in the evolution of Spirit, its establishment, even sometimes at the cost of the rejection of other parts, and again its extension to other parts of nature. The establishment, however, is always prior to extension. It is to open this inner

being that religion, occultism, philosophy and spiritual realisation have been utilised by Nature. The first three are approaches while the last is the definite entry.

The Value of Philosophy and Religion

Religion and philosophy have sometimes co-operated with each other but at other occasions worked on exclusively separate lines. Spiritual experience too has proceeded on independent lines, breaking relation from both these. But, these experiments on independent lines were necessary in the evolution of Nature, in order to find her true and whole way towards integral knowledge and consciousness. It is more so, since all these correspond to some fundamental needs of human being. Religion seeks to link man with the Divine and to sublimate the thought, life and flesh, so that they may follow the Spirit. But, this knowledge must be correlated with the knowledge of the facts of science and this is the task of philosophy. In the spiritual field, however, both religion and philosophy must be subordinate to yoga since in yoga both get their fulfilment. Fulfilment in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, is well compatible with transcendence since transcendence here includes integration. Thus, yoga is the method as well as the end. Knowledge, will and feeling, all are instruments of the realisation of spirituality.

But, by this Sri Aurobindo does not mean to lessen the importance of philosophy. He is no less a philosopher than a yogin, only he does not exaggerate the value of intellect in the total being. Philosophy to him, is intellectual and not supramental knowledge. Hence it must be confined to its own place in the hierarchy of spiritual values.⁹⁴ In the gnostic stage, all religion, philosophy, art and other phenomena of mental level shall be fulfilled in a higher spontaneous supramental knowledge and will. Till then, so long as we are men, all these are equally necessary. As Sri Aurobindo says, "An intellectual approach to the highest knowledge, the mind's possession of it, is an indispensable aid to this movement of Nature in the human being."⁹⁵ Intellect must be satisfied and enlightened. The support of reflective and critical reason is equally necessary. Intellect too should attain divine contact, if not directly then indirectly. Philosophy is concerned with the statement of general spiritual truth, the logic of the Infinite, the logic of things, their inter-relation and status in spiritual evolution. Hence, philosophy,

according to Sri Aurobindo, "must be a spiritual philosophy."⁹⁶ But, however spiritual it may be, philosophy is not a substitute for Yoga. A spiritual mind can, at best, seek individual liberation or escape to other world, as it is in most of the systems of philosophy, but it is not a substitute for spirituality. Spiritual evolution requires a higher dynamis than mind.

The Transition to Supermind

The cosmic purpose is not only a revelation of the Spirit but also a radical and integral transformation of Nature. The superman is not a greater man or a mystic. Superman transcends man. Supramental status, like Alexander's Deity, remains unknowable to mind though it can look towards it through the glimpses of some intermediary consciousness. It is only on the analogy of the transition from intellectual to spiritual level that one can guess this stage. Metaphysical deliberation is only of little help here, though the truth is sometimes grasped by mystic experience.

The transition from mind to supermind is a passage from Nature to supernature. All other lower planes are known through the working of the consciousness-force on inconscience and ignorance. The superior planes create their own foundation in our subliminal parts and from there influence the evolutionary process. Though involved in earth-nature, Overmind and Supermind have no such planes for they are superconscient to our ignorance. They can emerge only when the being and powers of the superconscience descend upon us, uplift us and formulate themselves in us. The ascent alone can achieve only a temporary and half-hearted result. For a real transformation, there must be descent, an intervention from above and an absolute surrender from below.

Man's control over himself is the logical consequence of this evolutionary process. As he evolves in supernature, he becomes more and more free. Freedom from lower nature, however, implies submission to Supernature. It is only when man becomes an instrument in the hands of Divine that he escapes the mechanical determinism of Nature. Such a union does not annihilate individual but fulfils him. "It is the passage not into non-existence but to a greater existence."⁹⁷ By realising himself as a centre and formation of the universal and transcendent spirit, man becomes more and more powerful and effective.

Yoga and Evolution

Yoga means union. It is "a methodised effort towards self perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being, and a union of individual with the universal and transcendent Existence, we see partially expressed in man and in the cosmos."⁹⁸ Thus in a sense, all philosophy, religion, and all life is Yoga. The human and the cosmic evolution proceed on the same pattern. There is the same heightening and widening of the process, ascent to new levels and the integration of the lower one. Yoga is, thus, a compressed form of the method of evolution in Nature." Integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo, starts with an idea of integral Divine. Thus, like integral psychology, integral yoga also is based on integral philosophy. This, however, does not mean that yoga is subordinated to philosophy. In a sense, philosophy and yoga are correlative to each other. The more integral is yoga the more integral shall be the philosophy based upon it and *vice versa*. As the yogin ascends in his experience, so he tends to arrive at more and more perfection in his vision. It may be that he may not always feel the necessity of putting the experience in intellectual terms, and thereby never become a philosopher in the intellectual sense. But then, the intellectual communication of spiritual experience being impossible, the yogin shall not be able to help the mental beings and hence fall short of the yogic aim of cosmic liberation thereby making his yoga imperfect. The need of philosophy can be optional only in the race of gnostic being, but unless the entire human race transcends the mental stage, philosophy is the highest knowledge for us. Philosophy stands highest in man's knowledge and its value must not be deteriorated unless we transcend man. But, the intellect, on the other hand, does not create truths and it is here, that the supremacy of yoga and the importance of religion and science stands unchallenged. All true philosophy is a "philosophy of yoga."¹⁰⁰ To understand Sri Aurobindo's view about the interrelation of all these, one must grasp his integral spirit in which everything receives its due and everything is utilised for the achievement of the supreme end, the Sacchidananda, which is equally the end of all our philosophy, science, religion and yoga.

We must again, distinguish between the epistemological and ontological significance of yoga, yoga as method and yoga as end; though ultimately Sri Aurobindo himself makes no distinction between epistemology and ontology since for him knowing is

being. Yoga is a method of philosophy but also its culmination. It is in the sense that yoga is a method to realise the integral Divine, that Sri Aurobindo calls it "nothing but practical psychology."¹⁰¹ It is because will must follow knowledge that yoga is a corollary of philosophy and again, it is because the supramental knowledge cannot be attained without yoga, that philosophy is subservient to yoga, just as intellect is subordinate to Spirit though also integrated in it."¹⁰² All other forms of yoga are also psychological processes emphasising the perfection of this or that aspect of man, but as integral psychology perfects all one-sided approaches in psychology so also all kinds of yoga are perfected in integral yoga. Thus, integral yoga, integral psychology and integral philosophy are correlative to each other. Sri Aurobindo's is an integral approach, not so much a criticism but a fulfilment of all other approaches in psychology, philosophy or yoga and even in religion.

Our excuse for such a long digression from the original subject, is the necessity of the clarification of concepts, which, we feel is the life-blood of all knowledge. Sri Aurobindo is himself very careful about this principle and has made subtle distinctions everywhere, only that he, like a true yogin-philosopher, has never lost sight of the unity of knowledge. To resume our discussion about yoga and evolution, the evolution proceeds through matter, life and mind and they are highly important in it. Hence, no integral yoga can neglect the body, nervous energies or intellect. Secondly, as evolution aims at transfiguration and exaltation of the lower, so also the integral yoga leaves nothing, but exalts all and transfigures all. Again, evolution is not only individual but cosmic so also is the integral yoga. It aims, not at individual but cosmic liberation and supramentalisation. Thus both evolution and yoga have common ends; but whereas evolution proceeds slowly and indirectly and seeks Divine in the symbols of Nature, Yoga works rapidly and directly and can reach the Transcendent beyond the universe. Hence generalisation of yoga would tremendously stimulate evolution in Nature.

Synthesis of Yoga

Hath-yoga acts on gross body, Rajayoga on subtle body. The triple path of works, love and knowledge aims at the liberation in truth, beatitude and infinity. These constitute a hierarchical order and each one of these separately, is a one-sided effort.

Hence, to arrive at a perfect system, Sri Aurobindo attempts at a synthesis of all these. The principle, however, is neither a combination *en-masse* nor successive practice. It neglects the outward forms of these disciplines and seizes rather some central principle common to all, which includes and utilises their particular principles in the right place and proportion. Thus integral yoga seeks to transform and integrate the entire being of man. In the yogin the centre is shifted from ego to real self which is the same as integral Absolute. In contrast to other systems, Sri Aurobindo's yoga has more scope for freedom and individual variation, though some broad outlines are fairly common to all. This catholicity of approach is characteristic of Sri Aurobindo, of all his philosophy, religion, psychology and yoga. Integral yoga leads to integral realisation and finally, an integral liberation, a synthesis of all methods, conceptions of Reality and also that of liberation. An integral purity leads to integral beatitude and prepares for integral perfection of humanity. This, however, is not eclecticism or a mere putting together of various views. It is the outcome of dynamic and integral realisation of Spirit, the Sacchidananda who is equally the synthesis and culmination of all knowledge.

Consecration and Concentration

Yoga presupposes an internal need, an inner call for the Divine. This may be aroused by any means, philosophy, religion, art or anything else. The wider the moving idea force the better for the seeker. The main thing is the decision of the mind and the will, resulting in complete and effective self-consecration to God and God alone. Surrender of the entire being soul, mind, heart, sense, will, life, body, is the first condition of yoga. The task is very difficult but escapism has no place in integral yoga. It requires an all receiving concentration which leads to a realisation of Divine. This, and not philosophy is merely its systematic study through mental concepts. As Sri Aurobindo says, "A concentration which culminates in a living realisation and the constant sense of the presence of One in ourselves and in all of which we are aware, is what we mean in Yoga by knowledge and the efforts after knowledge."¹⁰³ Philosophy is a half way house to supramental knowledge.¹⁰⁴

Synthesis of Knowledge, Love and Action

Sri Aurobindo gives equal importance to thought, heart and

will. Integral Yoga is a synthesis of the Yoga of knowledge, Yoga of devotion and the Yoga of works. The heart can directly realise the truth. Life can be spiritualised through the sacrifice of knowledge, love and works with the psychic being as the leader and priest of the sacrifice. Delight is the nature of consciousness and love is the acme of delight. Hence, love is the crown of all being. It leads to perfect union and greatest spiritual fulfilment. The more complete the knowledge the richer is the love. Such a love however, is not contrary to works. "Love is the crown of works and the flowing of knowledge."¹⁰⁵ It is fully satisfied only in the Divine, since it is here, that it is absolute, eternal and unalloyed. It is a yearning for absolute unity, beauty, delight eternity and possession. Again, not only wisdom and love, but power is also an aspect of the Divine and put here for divine use. The perfection in Yoga includes perfection of the fundamental soul powers, the perfect surrender of our instrument and action to the Divine Shakti, together with soul-faith in the Divine. All the activities of the mind, intelligence, memory, reason and imagination etc., as well as the senses are transformed in supramental stage. They develop new strength peculiar to this level.

Triple Transformation

But this can be done only by bridging the gulf between mind and supermind which requires a triple transformation, psychic, spiritual and supramental. The psychic change implies the conversion of our entire present nature into a soul instrumentation. Integration is not complete at vital and mental levels. For a complete and radical change the spiritual experience must make the lower parts to recognise it as their own law. This illumination is constantly opposed by the lower parts as well as the hostile forces. This can be overcome by an opening up of the inner being, the inner life-consciousness and life-mind, the subtle-physical mentality. But to bring a decisive and permanent change, the inner psychic being should be opened. It is then, that the higher spiritual mind and overmind uplift the central being towards their own level and commence the last integration of nature. Spiritual change is the descent of a higher light, knowledge, power, force, bliss, purity into the whole being. Lastly, the supramental change requires ascent into supermind and the transforming descent of the supramental consciousness into our entire being and nature. The soul may come in direct contact of

Reality through mind and heart but an integral transformation requires the transmutation of mental, vital and physical. Again, to arrive at the widest totality and profound completeness, the consciousness must shift its centre from surface to inner being. All other steps are merely aids, the central way is the findings of the self within us. First of all, this results in the harmonisation and spiritual order of the whole being. Next, there is an inflow of all kinds of spiritual experiences. But, this again is not complete till the inward opening is collaborated by an opening outward. This can be done by the ascent of the psychic being to supramental levels. But again, the descent of the higher consciousness is equally necessary since it alone can bring a permanent ascent. It gradually transforms the entire being and establishes it on a higher plane. This is not done by a sudden leap but by a gradual process, since there are numerous intervening difficulties. Thus, the psychic change has to call in spiritual change to complete it. So also the spiritual change is not completed without the supramental transformation. This finishes the passage of the soul through the ignorance and bases its consciousness, life, power and form of manifestation on a complete and effective self-knowledge.

All this requires the combined working of our great instruments, viz. *sastra*, *utsaha*, *guru*, and *kala*. The supreme *sastra* of the integral yoga is the eternal Veda, secret in the heart of every thinking and living being. Another kind of *sastra* is about methods, which differ with individual variations. The supreme guide and teacher is the inner guide secret within us. Again, broadly speaking, there are three stages in the process of yoga, the contact with the Divine, the transformation of the whole conscious being and, finally the utilisation of our transformed humanity as a divine centre in the world.

In this ascent there are various grades, which are not only faculties but levels of being and energy-substances of spirit. As we descend, the consciousness becomes more and more thin and rarefied in the light. As we ascend, there is a finer but stronger and truer spiritual substance. Hence, with the descent of these higher grades, their light, consciousness and bliss transforms the physical, vital and mental. But for the obstruction of inconscience, this process is natural, since all the levels are fundamentally the same consciousness-force, only in different forms. Supramental consciousness can be established in an individual only when he becomes a centre of its working in the universe. And when it is firmly established here, it shall work on earth-existence which

would result in a hierarchy of states of consciousness rising from mind to supermind.

The Gnostic Being

Now, what would be the nature of this future transformation of man which Sri Aurobindo calls the stage of gnostic being? The future destiny of man has rarely been painted in such gay colours and with such a happy combination of realism and optimism. Sri Aurobindo is a prophet of new age, not the age of a Nietzschein superman, but of the advent of divine man. The entire being, thinking, living and action of the gnostic being shall be governed by universal spirit. He would feel divine everywhere and also in all parts of his own being. Everywhere he sees his own self, in beings as well as in nature. He would be universal but free in the universe, individual but not limited by a separative individuality, commonality and essentiality in their harmony. He will have complete self-knowledge and complete self-mastery. In lower grades of gnostic beings, these shall be restricted and limited. But the supramental being would act as a cosmic individual. His awareness, will and action shall be in union with the Absolute. Its sense would be the delight of manifestation. His cosmic sympathy would be a part of his being. There will be no conflict of his good with the good of others. His feelings and actions shall be spontaneously universal. His entire purpose shall be the joy of being. All will be seen in the whole. His knowledge shall be the Real-idea of the supermind. This evolution would transform the entire world-consciousness and world-action. The gnostic being will have a complete knowledge and hold of all existence. All will be the finding of the self by the self in the self."¹⁰⁶ The present indirect knowledge shall be replaced by intuitive knowledge. The gnostic being shall live for the Divine and be an instrument of the manifestation of His super-Nature. In him, the will of the spirit shall directly control the body since the subconscious or inconscient is transformed into conscient or supraconscient. The eternal Ananda shall be revealed in the universal phenomena. It shall be felt in the entire being as well as in Nature.

Ethics Transcended

Now, what shall be the place of personality and thereby that of morality in gnostic stage? Ethics presupposes individuality and personality. In supramental consciousness, the ego is replaced

by impersonal and universal being and yet it has a form and personality which is its distinctive mark. The gnostic person is an infinite and universal being revealing itself through the particular forms of an individual and temporal manifestation. He shall be completely self-determined. All his actions shall spontaneously proceed from knowledge. There shall be no ignorance, error, falsehood or evil. Virtue and vice is determined with reference to the nature of ultimate end and hence in a stage where the ultimate end is truly realised, there shall be no place for ethics. As Kant and Bradley rightly point out, the moral man remains in a perpetual conflict and if the conflict is abolished, ethics becomes superfluous. The axiological ought is higher than moral ought and the latter is subordinated to the former. All values are subordinated to spiritual values and fulfilled in it.

In the supramental stage, there shall be a perfect accord within man as well as between individuals. The knowledge and action here, shall have the width and plasticity of infinite freedom. The individual nature would be a current of supernature. The gnostic being shall have an inherent Truth-knowledge, Truth-sight, Truth-feeling, and Truth-will, Truth-sense and Truth-dynamics of action. There shall be a perfect control of physical, vital and mental being. Again, for some time at least, the gnostic principle shall exist side by side with the lower degree of consciousness and life but finally it will dominate the whole. Its manifestation will make the entire lower scheme, an evolution, without strife. The supramental being shall work by a knowledge through identity, while other types of gnostic beings shall have different and lower types of knowledge. This change would be complete, when the supramental evolution becomes complete and rises into the greater fullness of a supreme manifestation of Sacchidananda.

ETHICS

"Morality is in the ordinary view", says Sri Aurobindo, "a well regulated individual and social conduct which keeps society going and leads towards a better, a more rational, temperate, sympathetic, self-restrained dealing with our fellows. But ethics from the spiritual point of view is much more, it is a means of developing in our action and still more essential in the character of our being the diviner self in us, a step of our growing into the nature of the Godhead."¹⁰⁷

Thus Sri Aurobindo presents an ethics of self-realization. "To discover the spiritual being in himself is the main business of the spiritual man and to help others towards the same evolution is his real service to the race."¹⁰⁸ Spirit synthesizes egoism with altruism, reason with sensibility, individual with society and even transcends this synthesis. Perfectionism or Eudaeonism is definitely an advance upon other theories, when it regards self-realization as the end and includes social and individual, rational and sensible, egoistic and altruistic aspects in the total self. But while taking the rational self to be the highest, it falls short of the complete ideal. Reason, as Hegel has advocated, proceeds through a dialectical process. It cannot completely transform the infra-rational. This fact has led many anti-intellectual philosophers to revolt against the philosophy of "bloodless ballot of categories." Some extremists even subordinate reason to passion. Bradley retorted, "Metaphysics is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe on instinct."¹⁰⁹ Reason in Plato, Aristotle and even in Hegel, is certainly not intellectual, it is also not the spirit, since the spirit not only transcends but integrates. The spiritual self, as Sri Aurobindo points out, is not only individual and social but above all transcendental. This transcendental aspect of self has been missed by almost all the moralists. This self is more than truth, beauty and goodness since it is consciousness, existence and bliss. In it neither social nor individual, neither rational nor infrarational is subordinated to each other but integrated, transformed and spiritualized. Reason is not an end in itself. With infra-rational, it also seeks its destiny.

Thus Ethics transcends into spirituality. Ethics, by its very nature, goes beyond itself. "It is a moral duty not to be moral," says Bradley, and this is "the duty to be religious."¹¹⁰ This phrase, while wrongly calling the religious urge "the duty", rightly points out to man's aspiration for something higher than ethics. Life seeks its absolutes. Morality is essentially a matter of mental level. Kant rightly points out the persistent element of conflict in moral life. "Virtue, in fact, lives in the life of its antagonist,"¹¹¹ is the paradox of morality. To solve this paradox, one should transcend the moral level itself. It is then alone that the moral conflict is reconciled together with all other conflicts. Both Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi visualized self-realization or God realization as the ultimate end. Gandhi stopped at the moral level,¹¹² Sri Aurobindo goes beyond, through religious and spiritual levels, to envisage a perpetual progress in supramental gnosis. Thus morality,

for him, is a passing phase. As he says, "These problems are of the mind and the ignorant life, they do not accompany us beyond mind ; as there is a cessation of the duality of truth and error in an infinite Truth-Consciousness, so there is a liberation from the duality of good and evil in an infinite Good, there is transcendence."¹¹³ Thus morality belongs to the level of ignorance. But its real foundation is the same as that of religion and spirituality. It is man's urge to grow, to be universal, to transcend his individuality which leads him towards morality, though only to transcend to a higher level. "Our inner nature is the progressive expression of the eternal spirit and too complex a power to be tied down by a single dominant mental or moral principle."¹¹⁴

But transcendence, by no means, disproves of the indispensability of ethics. In the evolution of man, every stage has its importance in the whole. The higher does not negate the lower but integrates it while transcending it. "But, nonetheless, there is also this other middle truth of consciousness which awakens us to the values of good and evil and the appreciation of their necessity and importance; this awakening, whatever may be the sanction or validity of its particular judgements, is one of the indispensable steps in the process of evolutionary Nature."¹¹⁵

Morality is a middle stage between Nature and Super-Nature. Both Nature and Super-Nature are non-moral. Morality transcends Nature; Supernature transcends morality. Like other impulses and activities ethical impulse and activity also arises from the infrarational and the sub-conscient. With Freud, Sri Aurobindo admits the sub-conscious and instinctive beginning of whatever is great and small in human life but that admission does not detract any merit as genesis does not decide value. Thus morality is at first instinctive and accepted without questioning. Man obeys the moral law as the social law or the law of Nature. But gradually man's reason asserts its supremacy to correct the crude ethical instinct, to separate and purify the ideas, to harmonize the clash of moral ideals and finally to arrange a system of ethical action. This is a necessary stage in our advance but ultimately man cannot remain satisfied with ethical ideas and ethical will, for the ethical being seeks a persistent growth in the Absolute. It seeks an inner growth and not the moral conduct alone. The value of moral conduct is not in its outer result but in its contribution to inner growth. Action, according to Sri Aurobindo, is always relative and justice, right, purity and selflessness of an action cannot be decided by outer consequences. But the real

moral worth is assessed neither by intention nor by consequence but by the help of the act in spiritual growth, as that alone is the ultimate end. This is the real consummation of the moral impulse and conduct. Morality, according to Sri Aurobindo, is neither a calculation of good and evil in conduct nor an effort to conform to social norms. It is an attempt to grow into the divine nature. It is this which it seeks through purity, truth, right, sympathy and charity. This spiritual being, and not the 'Asur' of Nietzsche, is the real superman. Morality consummates in divine nature, when man spontaneously and naturally becomes divine. His will, at this stage is neither infrarational nor rational but divine. This is the process of the progress of the ethical being.

This analysis of the evolutionary progression of the ethical being in the moral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo finds an explanation for all the other theories of ethics. In the history of ethics, as in the history of any other field of man's activity, one finds the same progression from infrarational through rational to suprarational stage. These stages are psychological rather than chronological and in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, it is the former which have always been held as the real meaning of the latter. Man's progress to the mental is through the physical and vital.

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Philosophy should take account of the meaning of the progression of human history, as that will give it an insight into the aim of mankind, its future possibilities, and the inherent misuse working in the cycle of social development. Psychological forces working behind the spiral of social evolution are often so much tangled and complex that any rigorous analysis becomes difficult. They have often been neglected by the philosophers of history. The basic fallacy underlying all such interpretations of the process of social development is the explanation of the inner by the outer. The approach is seldom truly philosophical. It is generally based on economic, political or other perspectives. The economist tries to explain the entire process in terms of the struggle for survival and the politician in terms of the balance of power. Human progress has been generally assessed in terms of the development in laws, customs, rites, economic and material well-being, or, at the most, in terms of the organization of the

external relations. Even the psychologists have often interpreted various phenomena in physiological terms. Again, many philosophers of history reduced the role of the material forces working on the surface. Even if there were some attempts to look behind the mask, the insight into the psychological forces was always over-burdened by the play of economic and political forces. As distinguished from all such attempts, Sri Aurobindo presents a psychological interpretation of history. In his interpretation of history, his vision is firmly centred on the integral principle, working through all the stages of the cycle of social development, as it is that integral principle which the social philosopher seeks to grasp, know and utilize for the regeneration of mankind.

Stages in the Cycle of Social Development

Like Lamprecht of Germany, Sri Aurobindo finds symbolic, typical, conventional, individualist and subjective stages in the cycle of social development. The process of evolution, according to him, however, is not linear, as it was for the nineteenth century philosophers of history but spiral. He borrows the names suggested by Lamprecht. But there the similarity ends, as he always keeps a keen eye on the multiple and complex nature of man and society. As he says, "A constant rediscovery and new formulation and larger synthesis in the mind, a mighty remoulding in its deeper parts because of a greater enlarging Truth not discovered or not well fixed before, is that Spirit's way with our past achievement when he moves to the greatness of the future."¹¹⁶

1. *The Symbolic Age*: The earliest stage in the primitive beginning of human society, Sri Aurobindo calls, symbolic. This stage is always imaginatively religious. It is what Freud and other psychologists and the philosophers of religion call the totalistic stage. They have taken the totem in its external form. According to Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, the totem was merely a symbol for the power which man sensed behind the forces of Nature.

2. *The Typical Stage*: The second stage after symbolic is typical. This "is predominantly psychological and ethical."¹¹⁷ Here religion and spirituality is subordinated to Dharma, the ethical discipline. Its main contributions are the social ideals, the ideal of social honour, though these tend to become more and more fixed and traditional.

3. *The Conventional Stage*: Thus the typical stage naturally passes into the conventional stage.¹¹⁸ The types now become conventions. As the symbols become fossilized in conventions, the psychological ideas behind them are easily forgotten. Once the type is fixed, the ethical ideal becomes a mere fiction. The division of society becomes a purely economic division of labour. But when even the economic basis gives way, the system becomes rather a source of degeneration and falsehood. According to Sri Aurobindo, forms of institutions must change with the purpose of the spirit behind them, otherwise they cease to serve their function and disorganize the individual as well as the social life.

Strictly speaking, these stages of development, as pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, are psychological rather than chronological. It is not a temporal division of the history of mankind, as these psychological forces work simultaneously as well as successively at different places in different times. The conventional stage, the individualistic and other stages, can be witnessed in the contemporary society at various places. They fix the stage of psychological development of society, which serves in the assessment of the value of the present stage as well as in predicting the future course of progress. The interpretations of history (apart from Sri Aurobindo's interpretation) are useful from different perspectives. But Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of history, howsoever one might disagree with its value from other points of view, is particularly valuable from the standpoint of social thought. It serves to interpret the inner psychological meaning of the past history, the ideal of social development and finally to visualize the future of mankind. It supplies a firm foundation for an integral social thought.

4. *The Individualistic Stage*: Thus when the gulf between the conventions and the inner truth becomes intolerable, reason rejects the old form and human society passes from the conventional to the individualistic stage. The bankruptcy of the old forms leaves the individual alone to decide his course. Individualism becomes inevitable and justified when the social standards, norms and institutions are petrified and stultify the free growth of the individual soul.

Individualism, as is admitted by Sri Aurobindo, was first born in Europe. It spread over the world, as the rest of the mankind was still in the torpor of the conventional stage. It spread in the East not because the East had no truth of its own

but because it had lost its vitality in the stereotyped conventionalism. The truths, which the individualistic Europe discovered were true to its peculiar analytic and pragmatic reason. Individualism spread because of the West's passion for seeking the truth and realizing it in life at all cost. It began in the revolt of reason and culminated in the triumph of physical science. In the conventional age, religion was dogmatic and persecuted science in its name. In politics, it sanctioned tyranny. The social order was based on stereotyped conventions. Gradually, when this burden became intolerable, reason in man revolted and questioned the authority of society, stage, religion and even of the moral laws and overthrew those that were found bankrupt.

Two Idea-Forces

In the East, one witness struggle between Western individualism and old conventionalism, in which the former is winning, though also assuming a changed form. This should have an enormous influence over the world. As against the suggestion that the Western material and rational individualism may spread over India, Sri Aurobindo categorically states, "The influence of the East is likely to be rather in the direction of subjectivism and practical spirituality, a greater opening of our physical existence to the realisation of ideals other than the strong but limited aims suggested by the life and the body in their own gross nature."¹¹⁹ The individualistic age of Europe, however, has fixed two idea-forces of master potency, *viz.*, the conception of democratic equality of the individuals as well as the liberty of individual growth. The former is generally accepted and is the basis of the present socialism. The latter, however, has not been accepted in practice by the Fascists, Communists and many others, though it is precisely this idea which carries the profoundest rationalism of the West and the highest spiritualism of the East; and the greatest possibilities of the future.

Not Revival but Revolution

History, according to Sri Aurobindo, does not repeat itself, though it often appears to do so. Not revival but transcendence, not modification but transformation, is the law of the human cycle. Destruction is necessary for construction. Till the dawn of the European influence, the Indian reformers and political leaders tried to re-discover the truth of the soul through a wide and

tolerant spiritual reason. Such again was the nationalism in China and the half-hearted awakening in other Eastern countries. It was the influence of the Western knowledge and their way of life that awakened a radical and effective revaluation of ideas and things in Eastern countries. This trend will not stop half way. "A revolutionary reconstruction of religion, philosophy, science, art and society is the last inevitable outcome,"¹²⁰ says Sri Aurobindo. The truth of the individual should become the truth of the universe.

5. *The Subjective Age*: There are, however, some tendencies which seek to modify the trend towards strict rationalism and the new typical order. The development of physical and psychological knowledge is opening a new horizon. Dynamic ideas, as Nietzsche's will to live, Bergson's Intuitionism, the Existentialism of Sartre and Heidegger are sweeping over the world. This is the dawn of what Sri Aurobindo calls the 'Subjective Age' which opens a new chapter in man's history. After the discovery of the physical, economic and sociological laws, it became clear to man that this knowledge is a mere part of the whole. Hence he tried to go deeper within him. As reason stumbled in this earth, man sought after other instruments such as intuitional knowledge and the deeper self awareness. Thus the rationalistic ideal was substituted by the intuitional knowledge, the utilitarian standard by self-realization, the life through physical laws by the life through cosmic laws, will and power. All this can be noticed in the present vitalistic theories, pluralism, pragmatism, instrumentalism and existentialism, etc. The subjective trend is obviously more visible in art, music and literature. This was at first exhibited in psychological vitalism and more and more concentration on pathological aspects. This, however, was succeeded by a truly psychological, mental, intuitive and psychical art, music and literature, which was more subjective, though still infirm in grasp and rudimentary in form. The will-to-power and the will-to-live, seizing upon the material and intellectual forces, led the world to the catastrophies of the great wars. The hope of humanity lies in the still hidden subjective principle. As Sri Aurobindo points out, "A unifying and harmonizing knowledge can alone find the way, but that knowledge belongs to a deeper principle of our being to which oneness and integrality are native. It is only by finding that in ourselves that we can solve the problem of our existence and with it the problem of the true way of individual and communal living."¹²¹

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Nationalism

Among the contemporary Indian social thinkers, Sri Aurobindo has presented the most elaborate discussion on nation. While, on the one hand, he was a staunch advocate of human unity, on the other hand, he conceived nationalism as a help and not a hindrance to it. In his social and political thought, everywhere one finds wholes within wholes. An individual is complete within himself and yet he is also a consistent of the nation. A nation is complete in itself and yet each nation is a part of humanity. Humanity again is complete in itself and yet it is a part of Nature. Thus one finds wider and wider wholes from individual to cosmic reality. The search after any one of these does not lessen the importance of lower integers. Though an individual is a part of a nation, yet his individuality, *Swadharma* and perfection cannot be delimited by the nation. The nation should be such in which all the individual members may freely evolve themselves maintaining their individual characteristic. Similarly, human society or world state should be such in which each nation may contribute to the evolution of humanity by maintaining its own characteristics, culture and individual freedom. And finally, humanity should grow not independent of Nature but very much as a part of it. Thus, according to Sri Aurobindo, nationalism does not retard the growth of human unity. His ideas here appear to be more balanced than that of the other humanists and internationalists who overlook the truth of self-realization in the individual and the nation. As it is wrong to make a state all powerful by overlooking the freedom of the individual, similarly the concept of an all powerful world state, abolishing the free existence of nations, is alien to Nature. From the spiritual point of view the higher and wider integer does not eliminate but fulfils the perfection and freedom of its parts."¹²²

The Concept of Nation

Under British rule in India, Sri Aurobindo played an important role in the Indian freedom movement from 1893 to 1910. His idea of nationalism follows from the gospel of *Bande Mataram*. For him, nation was not a geographical area, physical territory or mental idea. He worshipped India as the Mother or Mother power who has sustained Indians for thousands of years. He

planned a Bhawani Mandir scheme for the youth of Bengal on the pattern of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's scheme outlined in his famous novel *Anand Math*. His speeches and writings of that period show that he raised patriotism to the pedestal of religion. In his essay entitled *Bhawani Mandir* he wrote, "For what is a nation? What is our mother country? It is not a piece of earth, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty Shakti, composed of all the Shakties of all the millions of gods assembled in one mass of force and welded into unity. The Shakti we call in India, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the Shakties of three hundred million people..."¹²³ In his article on Bankim Chandra, Sri Aurobindo made it clear that so long as the members of a nation see it only as a piece of land, it does not take the form of a divine mother power; so long as it does not cover their heart and mind, a nation is not born. Thus, according to Sri Aurobindo, the formation of nation requires not only love of country among its members but a sentiment of worship towards it. A merely physical, vital or mental approach towards a nation is insufficient, it requires a spiritual attitude.

Importance of Patriotism

Thus Sri Aurobindo's speeches and writings were full of high patriotism. Addressing the students of Bengal National College he once said, "There are times in a nation's history when providence places before it one work, one aim, to which everything else, however high and noble in itself, has to be sacrificed. Such a time has now arrived for our motherland when nothing is dearer than her service, when everything else is to be directed to that end. If you will study, study for her sake; train yourselves body and mind and soul for her service. You will earn your living that you may live for her sake. You will go abroad to foreign lands that you may bring back knowledge with which you may do service to her. Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice. All is contained in that one single advice."¹²⁴ Through the medium of the newspaper *Bande Mataram*, Sri Aurobindo introduced the youth of the country to patriotism and nationalism. To patriotism, he gave the highest place among human sentiments. In his own words, "Love has a place in politics, it is the love of one's country, for one's countrymen, for the glory, greatness and happiness of the race, the divine Ananda of self immolation for one's fellows, the ecstasy of relieving their sufferings, the joy of

seeing one's blood flow for country and freedom, the bliss of union in death with the fathers of the race."¹²⁵ A person devoted to his country feels almost physical delight in the touch of its earth. He loves the seas, rivers, hills, music, poetry, literature and culture of the country. This love is the basis of patriotism. It is due to patriotism that we have a pride in the past of our country, suffer for it in the present, and undergo all sort of sacrifices to build up its future. This sacrifice, service and endurance results from patriotism. The worship of the motherland, its constant contemplation and perpetual service, keeps patriotism alive. The articles and lectures of Sri Aurobindo were so full of patriotic spirit that they caused a wave of awakening in the country.

Concept of Nationalism

It is a characteristic of Indian culture that it has never separated the mundane from the spiritual and the former has been always interpreted as an expression of the latter. Sri Aurobindo's patriotism and nationalism were never mundane; rather they were full of religious fervour. Service of the nation was his highest religion. As he wrote, "The work of national emancipation is a great and holy Yajna of which boycott, swadeshi, national education and every other activity, great and small, are only major or minor parts. Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice and the Motherland the goddess to whom we offer it; into the seven leaping tongues of the fire of the Yajna we must offer all that we are and all that we have, feeding the fire even with our blood and lives and happiness of our nearest and dearest for the Motherland is a goddess who loves not a maimed and imperfect sacrifice, and freedom was never won from the gods by a grudging giver."¹²⁶ Sri Aurobindo exhorted his countrymen to sacrifice everything for the nation. He considered devotion not as one aspect of life but the whole of it. For him service of the nation was a religious practice. In one of his lectures he said, "What is nationalism? Nationalism is not a mere political programme; nationalism is a religion that has come from God; nationalism is creed which you shall have to live... If you are going to be a nationalist, if you are going to assent to this religion of nationalism, you must do it in the religious spirit. You must remember that you are the instruments of God."¹²⁷ Thus Sri Aurobindo presented a religion of nationalism. He worshipped motherland as the Mother and the goddess and exhorted every one to sacrifice everything

for her. He demanded complete *Swarajya* and sanctioned every means for its achievement. In *Bande Mataram* he wrote, "We recognize no political object of worship except the divinity in our Motherland, no present object of political endeavour except liberty, and no method or action as politically good or evil except as it truly helps or hinders our progress towards national emancipation." Here Sri Aurobindo has admitted liberty as the one single goal of political movement. In his moral philosophy the excellence of end decides the excellence of means and any means can be adopted to fulfil a spiritual end. Therefore, he commanded his countrymen to adopt any political method and political action considered necessary for achieving complete freedom.

Considering nationalism as a *Dharma* Sri Aurobindo declared that the Indian national movement is being guided by divine inspiration. It is an effort to realize God in the country. Therefore, not even the mightiest can suppress it and it must win in the end. Sri Aurobindo's indomitable faith in the future of the country was rooted in his religion of nationalism. As he said, "Nationalism is a religion that has come from God... It has not been crushed. It is not going to be crushed. Nationalism survives in the strength of God and it is not possible to crush it, whatever weapons are brought against it. Nationalism is immortal, Nationalism cannot die because it is no human thing, it is God who is working in Bengal."¹²⁸

While speaking before his countrymen at different places Sri Aurobindo asked them to remember Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Shivaji and Guru Gobind Singh and posed the question as to whether this country of great men will prostrate at the feet of the foreigners or whether they are prepared to sacrifice everything to get it liberated. Thus Sri Aurobindo considered national movement as a divine command and spiritual rule. This love of nation, however, was never egoistic. In his many speeches he made it absolutely clear that India's freedom and evolution was not merely for India but for humanity itself, for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. He called upon every class of Indian society, specially the backward classes, while he was working for national awakening.

Concept of Nation-Soul

The individual, the nation and the humanity are the three manifestations of the divine, ultimate Reality. Self evolution is

the aim of life in the individual and in the nation. Nature at all levels is working towards self expression. Everywhere there is a soul behind the body, life and the mind. The aim of each individual, group, race, society or nation is self expression. Besides the development of the individuals, the goal of the family is its total perfection. The same can be said about other human groups. Everywhere the perfection of the individuals is complementary to the perfection of the collectivity.

Sri Aurobindo has conceived the Nation-soul on the basis of individual soul. In his own words. "The nation or society, like the individual, has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul behind all these signs and powers for the sake of which they exist. One may see even that, like the individual, it essentially is a soul rather than has one; it is a group soul that, once having attained to a separate distinctness, must become more and more self-conscious and find itself more and more fully as it develops its corporate action and mentality and its organic self expressive life."²⁹ Thus according to Sri Aurobindo, just as each individual has a body vital and mind, and a soul behind all these, similarly in every nation there is a vast territory, emotional unity, mental life and behind all these a nation-soul. Just as the individual is not body, vital or mind but soul, similarly the nation is not body, vital or mind but nation-soul. Just as physical, vital and mental development is necessary for the self development of the individual, similarly for the evolution of nation-soul, defence of the motherland, physical development of the country, increase of emotional unity and the artistic, philosophical, literary and scientific developments are indispensable. If any one of these is lacking neither the development of the individual soul nor that of the nation-soul is possible. Hence each nation should defend its land against foreign invasion. Each nation should grow culturally along with its physical, industrial and economic growth. Just as self realization is the *dharma* of the individual, similarly realisation of the nation-soul is the *dharma* of the nation. Just as individual self realisation is not selfishness but divine command, similarly realisation of nation-soul is not national selfishness but divine command. Just as sometimes man wrongly identifies his self with the ego, similarly in different times of human history, national self has been confused with national ego in the process of national self-realisation. Just as ego in the individual leads to his own and also to the harm

of others, similarly the growth of national ego in any nation leads it and other nations to trouble and suffering. An example of this phenomenon is a rise of national ego in Germany before the Second World War. Just as self-realisation is a gradual and difficult process in the life of the individual, similarly the self in the nation can be realised gradually and with much difficulty. Just as increasing freedom, harmony and unity are the symptoms of self realization in the individual, similarly the growth of nation-soul manifests in the growing freedom, harmony and unity among the various classes. Just as self realisation in the individual leads to his having harmonious relations with others, similarly evolution in nation-self leads to its having harmonious relations with other nations. Finally, just as self realisation is the *summum bonum* of the individual, similarly realisation of the nation-soul is the ultimate end of the nation.

The above-mentioned parallelism between the structure of individual and nation does not mean that Sri Aurobindo has missed the distinction between them or that he has forgotten that while the parts of an individual soul have no independent existence, the human beings constituting a nation have their own individual existence as well. Pointing out the distinction between individual and nation-soul Sri Aurobindo has maintained, "There is only this difference that the group soul is much more complex because it has a great number of partly self-conscious mental individuals for the constituents of its physical being instead of an association of merely vital subconscious cells."¹³⁰ It is due to this very distinction between individual soul and collective soul that most of the people are not prepared to admit that there is anything like nation-soul. It is for this reason again that some scholars consider individual-soul subjective and nation-soul objective. Citing examples from collective consciousness Sri Aurobindo has proved that nation-soul is not just a figment of his imagination.

Consciousness of Nation-Soul

Just as for a person living on ordinary physical, vital and mental level it is difficult to experience that he has a soul, similarly it is difficult for him to appreciate the concept of nation-soul. Again, just as individual soul is subject to spiritual experience, nation-soul can be experienced by collective consciousness. Just as soul in the individual is not objective similarly the nation-soul

is not subject to demonstration, perception or testimony. Finally, just as one who has experienced individual soul insists on its existence similarly a patriot directly experiences nation-soul. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "When we realise that the land is only the shell of the body, though a very living shell indeed and potent in its influences on the nation, when we begin to feel that its more real body is the men and women who compose the nation-unit, a body ever changing, yet always the same like that of the individual men, we are on the way to a truly subjective communal consciousness. For then we have some chance of realising that even the physical being of the society is a subjective power, not a mere objective existence. Much more is it in its inner self, a great corporate soul with all the possibilities and dangers of the soul life."¹³¹

In many of his works Sri Aurobindo has shown that in the present times one may witness increasing consciousness of nation-soul in most of the newly awakened nations. Most of the nations today are making efforts towards self realisation in every aspect of life. *Swadeshi* and *Swadharma* are the bases of this process. Evolution according to one's own nature is the goal of each object, living being and collectivity. To fulfil this mission is self-realisation. *Swadeshi* is very important in this process. Without it a nation cannot fulfil its *swadharma*. Therefore, today most of the nations are trying to enrich their culture, language, literature, philosophy, art, religion, economic and industrial life. If a harmony in all this evolution is maintained, it will lead to the progress of all humanity. But this is possible only when everywhere a realisation of nation-soul and not national ego is the aim. From this point of view Sri Aurobindo's nationalism can be called spiritual nationalism.

Spiritual Nationalism

In different countries many thinkers have presented various types of nationalism. Some have confused national evolution with territorial expansion. This has led to imperialism and colonialism which have been very harmful to the smaller less developed nations. Others have confused nationalism with racism, religionism etc. By presenting the idea of spiritual nationalism Sri Aurobindo has, on the one hand, presented philosophical basis for an integral evolution of the nation and, on the other hand, a political concept on the basis of which different nations may contribute to the progress of humanity while also progressing individually. Spiritual

nationalism implies that each human society, nation or other group is a sub-soul of that supreme, ultimate soul. The concept of spiritual nationalism is absolutely against any type of repression whether it may be the repression of the individual in the nation or the repression of some nation under colonialism or imperialism. According to it no section of the nation can be treated as diseased, negligible and so to be ignored or neglected. The concept implies that all the individuals gain in freedom, unity and harmony because these are the symptoms of spiritual national life. For it all types of progress is necessary – physical, economic, aesthetic, religious, moral and intellectual. It aims at an integral evolution of the nation. It advocates the principle that in the collectivity each constituent should fulfil its own *swadharma*. In it alone lies the welfare of the individual and the nation.

Sri Aurobindo was aware of the fact that in a society one class cannot dominate another for a long time, however superior it may be. In spiritual nationalism priority will have to be given to the progress of all backward classes, even if this involves some hindrance to the progress of others. All these principles are equally applicable to the life of the individual. In it each constituent also has its own *swadharma* and it should follow it. Body, vital or mind, none has a right to rule the others by repressing them. For the integral development of the individual all these should be given opportunity for free, harmonious and perfect development. In spiritual nationalism, not the national ego but the nation-soul is the reality. Like the spiritual individual, the spiritual nationalism rests not in the collective ego but in the collective soul. In it no individual, from saint to criminal, will be reformed by force of law or police, but would be changed internally. In the economic field, it does not aim at a gigantic machine of production, but at a system in which each individual will have an opportunity to grow freely according to its own nature. In the political field, the citizen will not be a slave or instrument of the state but a harmony will be maintained between the evolution of the individual and the nation. In the international field, the spiritual nation does not wage war against other nations but helps them in the realisation of their self without seeking their own selfish interest in this process. It is based on the principle of freedom in internal and external affairs. In a fully developed spiritual society, as the spiritual anarchist views it, all human beings will be free. And this will be possible because the primary conditions for it have been already fulfilled. In that stage, each individual will be a divine law unto

himself because it will not be an ego living for its own selfish ends but a soul established in the Divine. His life will be guided by his divine nature free from ego. For the establishment of such a spiritual nation, it is necessary that first some persons and then the entire group in the nation should evolve spiritually. Spiritual individuals alone constitute a spiritual nation. To be such a spiritual collectivity is the ideal of each nation. In it lies its own welfare as well as the welfare of its constituent parts. In it again also lies the welfare of humanity. From this point of view, Sri Aurobindo has emphasized the need of spiritual transformation of human societies. He has indicated the symptoms of the advent of a spiritual age and declared that these symptoms are slowly coming up at present. Thus Sri Aurobindo has full faith in a bright future for humanity. This faith is not based on some intellectual philosophy or logic but on the spiritual experience of an ultimate force behind the individual and collective life everywhere. It is based on the conviction that everything will happen according to the principles of this spiritual force. Therefore the evolution of spiritual nations and ultimately of a spiritual humanity is bound to come.

Nationalism and Human Unity

The evolution of nations and the growth of human unity are based on identical principle. Sri Aurobindo tried to find out the possibility of human unity and the method for achieving it. He analysed the process of the evolution of human societies to become nations and explored its conditions, difficulties, stages and methods. This is the subject of discussion in the first part of his famous work *The Ideal of Human Unity*. According to him, the principles which have been working behind the formation of nations will also lead to human unity. As the individual and the collectivity are two aspects of the same reality, their harmony is necessary and fundamental. This gain is the basis of nations and bigger collectivities. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "The whole process of Nature depends on a balancing and a constant tendency to harmony between two poles of life, the individual whom the whole or aggregate nourishes and whole or aggregate which the individual helps to constitute. Human life forms no exception to the rule. Therefore the perfection of human life must involve the elaboration of an as yet unaccomplished harmony between these two poles of our existence, the individual and the social aggregate.

The perfect society will be that which most entirely favours the perfection of the individual; the perfection of the individual will be incomplete if it does not help towards the perfect state of the social aggregate to which he belongs and eventually to that of the largest possible human aggregate, the whole of a united humanity."¹³²

Thus while the individual's development is necessary for the development of the nation, the development of the nation and finally of the whole humanity is necessary for the development of the individual. Experiments in Nature's realm are never destroyed completely but are preserved to maintain the variety and richness of its expression. Thus the individual need not be eliminated for the development of the family, nor the families be discarded for the development of the nation. Similarly, the free development of the nations is no hindrance to the growth of human unity. On the other hand, it may be said that just as the development of the individual members is necessary for the growth of the family and that of the families for the development of a nation, similarly the evolution of nations is necessary for the growth of humanity. This is so because families and nations are natural units of human society. Groups, associations or unities organised artificially to achieve some specific purposes may continue to live even after that purpose has been achieved or they may dissolve automatically in due course. But this is not applicable to the human unities which are natural, such as the family or the nation. Most of the thinkers accept family as a natural unit of human beings but some do not accept nation as a natural unit. According to Sri Aurobindo, however, the nation is the biggest unit of human beings which Nature has developed so far. This unit has not been fully organised as yet. One finds conflict in its constituent parts.

Nations and the Dominant Class

As a general rule, in each nation some particular class is dominant it may be the elite, the business class or the labour class. The nature of a nation is determined by the nature of the dominant class and it also determines the dominant ideal. For example, in ancient India, the intelligent and spiritual Brahmin class was dominant and therefore the ideal of the ancient Indian nation was philosophical and spiritual. In United States today the business class is dominant and, therefore, their nation politics

is determined by the rules of trade and commerce. But no single class can always dominate a nation and no class can be kept subordinate for ever. This leads to constant conflict among different classes. The exploited and depressed classes revolt and overpower the so far dominant class. If the new class understands the needs of other classes and accommodates them it may stay in power but since this is not normally the case, the depressed classes rise against the dominant class. Like Karl Marx, Sri Aurobindo also is of the view that the modern industrial societies are constituted by two important classes – the capitalists and the labourers. Of these, the former is generally dominant in most of the industrial societies and the more numerous labourer class is exploited and depressed. The future of the capitalists is dark, if they do not change, agrees Sri Aurobindo with Karl Marx. To quote his own words, "Therefore, the perfect counsel for a dominant minority is always to recognise in good time the right hour for its abdication and for the imparting of its ideals, qualities, culture, experience to the rest of the aggregate or to as much of it as is prepared for that progress. Where this is done, the social aggregate advances normally and without disruption or serious wound or malady, otherwise a disordered progress is imposed upon it, for Nature will not suffer human egoism to baffle for even her fixed intention and necessary."¹³³ In most of the nations, the dominant minority group is not prepared to relinquish its rights and this leads to civil war, class conflict and finally to the overthrow of the dominant class by the depressed class through revolution.

The above analysis of the national society is equally applicable to international society. Time has arrived today when the dominant nations should understand that they must take care of the welfare of other nations. If this is not done in time, the numerous backward nations will revolt against the domination of some few powerful nations. Human beings aspire for self-perfection, on the one hand, and self-expansion, on the other. Therefore, on the one hand, they should be allowed to organise themselves into families, classes and nations and to rise to universal human consciousness on the other.

Individual and Collectivity

According to Sri Aurobindo, "It is a constant method of Nature, when she has two elements of a harmony to reconcile to proceed at first by a long continued balancing in which she sometimes

seems to lean entirely on the one side, sometimes entirely to the other, at others to correct both excesses by a more or less successful temporary adjustment and moderating compromise."¹³⁴ Thus sometimes the individualist and sometimes the collectivist tendency has been growing and only a temporary compromise between them has been made so far. In the gradual evolution of human communities first the family, kinship, race and class developed and then evolved the nation which may now lead to human unity. But so far a reconciliation even between the individual and the community does not seem possible in the near future. A study of history and sociology tells us that man has always been living in communities small or big. One finds three types of relationship between the individual and the collectivity *viz.* individualistic, collectivistic and thirdly a community in which the individual has maximum freedom. This third type of community has generally remained an ideal and has not become actual so far. Most of the states are examples of this fact.

The State

While Sri Aurobindo has appreciated the nation, the state, according to him, is inadequate as a human community. Prior to being a political unit, the nation is a psychological unit since it has internal unity while the unity of the state is based on one or the other external factor. At present, the states have created external impediments in the path of human unity because for each state the satisfaction of its limited interests is the *summum bonum* and falsehood is being practised everywhere in the name of politics. Ideally, the state is based on the collective power and reason organised for the common good while in practice it is not more than an instrument for the realisation of the interests of few persons. To quote Sri Aurobindo. "The organised state is neither the best mind of the nation nor is it even the sum of the communal energies. It leaves out of its organised action and suppresses or unduly depresses the working force and thinking mind of important minorities, often of those which represent that which is best in the present and that which is developing for the future."¹³⁵

Dual Principles

The greatest fallacy in politics today is the fact that there are dual principles operative, one for matters within the state and

another for international affairs. Whereas in internal affairs one or the other civilized principle is followed, there is no such rule in international affairs. If a state does not attack the other it is because it does not see any advantage in it. Besides this, there is no control of international law, morality or ideals. One finds ego everywhere in the state. It is due to this ego that the state commits atrocities on weak individuals and classes within the nation and on weak nations outside it. In recent times the repression within the state has been considerably lessened but this is not true of international affairs. Sri Aurobindo has vehemently condemned the totalitarian attitude of the state. Neither he allows all powers to the state in relation with the individual nor does he consider it the best means of human evolution. According to him whereas national culture, religion and education are useful, state control over these is unnatural tyranny. Therefore, while he considers a nation to be an important unit of human community, he seeks constantly to diminish the power of the state.

There are two impediments in the way of human unity. First, human unity requires elimination of the national ego. Secondly, the human organisation should be such as does not repress individual freedom. Empires of different kinds have been units bigger than the state but they have failed to protect the self respect of nation's freedom of the individuals. That is the reason why modern thinkers are against imperialism. Nationalism is different from imperialism of every kind. Whereas empire is an artificial unit, the state is a natural unit. It is a psychological unit which Nature has herself developed. Therefore, according to Sri Aurobindo, "The nation in modern times is practically indestructible, unless it dies from within."¹³⁵ While the empire is perishable, the nation is immortal and it will stay till some higher sentiment does not replace nationalism. At that time also the nations shall stay within human organisation just as families are maintained within the nations.

Constituents of a Nation

Sri Aurobindo has dwelt at length over the question of the constituents of a nation. According to him, nationalism is based upon a common idea, a psychological unity based upon a common interest, common language and common culture, expressed in the sentiment of nationality. A nation first of all requires a land

of country. It cannot exist within a geographical unity. That is the reason why a nation defends its country with all its might. Another constituent element of a nation is the economic unity because the members of nation require some means of livelihood. Hence the nation guards its economic interests. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "In human life economic interests are those which are, ordinarily, violated with the least impunity for they are bound up with the life itself and the persistent violation of them, if it does not destroy the oppressed organism, provokes necessarily the bitterest revolt and ends in one of Nature's inexorable retaliations."¹³⁷

Another constituent element of a nation is political unity. Many a times the stronger nations have tried to destroy the political freedom of the weaker nations and merge them in their own political organisation but this effort could never succeed, because, while the political unity of the nation is natural, that of the empire is artificial. Therefore, a nation can be formed only when natural political unity is found among the groups constituting it.

Yet another important constituent of a nation is a powerful organisation for the protection of life, division of labour and general progress. Without such an organisation national unity is not possible. It is because of the absence of these constituent elements that experiments with the organisation of multinational empires, world empires and confederation states in Europe have failed. These experiments, however, have lead to the formation of modern nations.

Stages in the formation of Nation Unit

In the history of man the formation of a nation has passed through several stages. In ancient times there were small and big states in East and West which had internal unity but not all the constituent factors described so far. Hence empires were established on the ruins of these states. The process of the formation of the states proceeded further after the fall of these empires. But this time it had some special characteristics. Firstly, it had a centre in the form of state capital and secondly, it had a sovereign authority, imposing legal, administrative, political and linguistic uniformity and centrality. Thirdly, in it the administrators were appointed by the central authority. Thus these new states were more organised than the older states. After the evolution of states

in medieval times the process of state formation, according to Sri Aurobindo, passed through three stages. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "In such a process there must be in the nature of things, first, some kind of loose yet sufficiently compelling order of society and common type of civilization to serve as a framework or scaffolding within which the new edifice shall arise. Next, there must come naturally a period of stringent organisation directed towards unity and centrality of control and perhaps a general levelling and uniformity under that central direction. Last, if the new organism is not to fossilise in stereotype life, if it is to be still a living and vigorous creation of Nature, there must come a period of free internal development as soon as the formation is assured and unity has become a mental and vital habit."¹³⁸ In the process of state formation most of the states have already crossed two of the above-mentioned three stages. The third stage has not yet arrived anywhere. This stage must be reached before the ideal of human unity is achieved. At present, most of the states are in the second stage mentioned above. Centralization, uniformity and rigid control are also necessary in state formation but once these lead to national unity, this external control must be replaced by internal freedom and variety because ultimately the nation unit is not for itself. Either it is for the individual or for human community. The nation is a link between the individual and the humanity. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "The nation-unit is not formed and does not exist merely for the sake of existing; its purpose is to provide a larger mould of human aggregation in which the race, and not only classes and individuals, may move towards its full human development."¹³⁹ The nation-unit has to achieve the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity in human society. In internal matters the ideal of equality has been achieved in democratic states but complete liberty and fraternity have not been achieved. In international relations, liberty and fraternity are mere words while without their realisation human unity is not possible.

Internationalism and Human Unity

Though a staunch nationalist, Sri Aurobindo has maintained that the states should ultimately evolve towards human unity. There are grave impediments in the path of the realisation of human unity though one step in this direction has already been taken in the general feeling that human unity must be established.

In the evolution towards the goal of human unity Sri Aurobindo visualises the same stages as have to be passed for the making of a nation. The nation, as has been already pointed out, was born as an indefinite structure in which were present several elements of unification. Organisation and unity in this unit were increased by means of centralisation and pressure. In the third stage, the nation arrived at the step where not external pressure but sentiment of nationality became the basis of national unity. According to Sri Aurobindo, "If the unity of the human race is to be brought about by the same means and agents and in a similar fashion to that of the nation, we should expect it to follow a similar course."¹⁴⁰

Here one can see the impediments arising in the way of human unity. Before the sentiment for human unity can grow, humanity will have to pass through the stages of centralisation and international pressure. Not much has been done towards this end by the international organisations meant for this purpose. These organisations cannot save the world from a future war since, according to Sri Aurobindo, "National egoism remaining, the means of strife remaining its cause, opportunities, excuses will never be wanting."¹⁴¹

The ceiling on the armies and war material of the nations by international organisations is not the proper way to check war because if there is an intention to war, a nation can amass war material in no time and without much difficulty. The greatest impediment in the way of the success of international organisations is the fact that while the human beings who are members of families, clans and nations are to some extent developed and civilized, most of the nations are in the animal stage of evolution and no high sentiment or self-control can be expected from them. Hence Sri Aurobindo has advised that national egoism must be put to an end for the realization of human unity. Just as families and nations cannot be developed so long as individual egoism is intact, similarly true human unity cannot be realised so long as national egoism persists and there will always remain a constant danger of war. Because, as Sri Aurobindo has said, "The law is always the same, that wherever egoism is the root of action it must bear its own proper results and reactions and, however minimised and kept down they may be by an external machinery, their eventual outburst is sure and can be delayed but not prevented for ever."¹⁴² Therefore, human unity cannot be established without

eliminating national egoism. But this ego is not the self. As has already been pointed out, the evolution of individual soul is not a bar but an aid to the evolution of nation-soul. Similarly, the evolution of nation-soul is advantageous to the evolution of human unity. Therefore, each nation should grow fully and freely. And if each nation will be based on true nation-soul then not conflict but harmony will be the basis of international relations and the ideal of human unity will be achieved.

According to Sri Aurobindo, "The ideal society or state is that in which respect for individual liberty and free growth of the personal being to his perfection is harmonised with respect for the needs, efficiency, solidarity, natural growth and organic perfection of the corporate being, the society or nation. In an ideal aggregate of all humanity, in the international society or state, national liberty and free national growth and self-realisation ought in the same way to be progressively harmonised with the solidarity and unified growth and perfection of the human race."¹⁴³ Sri Aurobindo has harmonised different communities on the basis of the principle which is the basis for the harmony of individual and society. But, according to him, this is not possible through international organisations or laws because not moral principles, reason and justice but psychological forces determine the relations among nations. Even when some nation appears to be working on some moral principle, then also either it does not make any special sacrifice for it or if it does then it is under some compulsion. So far as fraternity between various nations is concerned, Sri Aurobindo calls it a mere theory. According to him, "The war brought into relief the fact that it is only the great powers that really count in the international scale; all others merely exist by sufferance or by protection or by alliance."¹⁴⁴ Years after these words were written, U.N.O. is still in the same state. Thus, the principle of equality has not become operative in international relations. Similarly, democratic ideals have not been achieved anywhere in the world. The states which are called democratic are actually being ruled by some capitalists, political leaders and other individuals.

And yet Sri Aurobindo had an irrepressible faith in the ideal of human unity. He wrote, "The political and administrative unification of mankind is not only possible but foreshadowed by our present evolution; the collective national egoism which resists it may be overborne by an increasing flood of the present unifying tendency to which the anguish of the European war gave a lovely

and an articulate voice.”¹⁴⁵ It is true that seeing the present circumstances the realization of the human unity appears to be rather difficult but just as bigger nations have been formed in the world by the combination of smaller nations similarly the ideal of human unity may be attained in the future. This requires tremendous efforts in the fields of political, social, economic, educational and other types of unification. This unity finds a due place for diversity, it will not only admit but even encourage small distinctions. For this mankind will have to develop relationships between the individuals, societies and mankind. All these three are natural units. None of these can be eliminated. In the beginning Nature develops the individuals, then the communities are developed and finally mankind will be developed in this very sequence. To quote Sri Aurobindo, “The united progress of mankind would thus be realised by a general principle of interchange and assimilation between individual and individual and again between individual and community, between community and community and again between the smaller commonality and the totality of mankind, between the common life and consciousness of mankind and its freely developing communal and individual constituents.”¹⁴⁶

Idea of World State

In the development of human unity the principle of liberty and diversity is as much important as that of unity because the ultimate reality is both one and many. The general scheme of Nature is based on infinite diversity. Hence an ideal society will have all types of freedom *viz.*, individual, national, religious, social and moral. Clarifying the concept of liberty Sri Aurobindo wrote, “By liberty we mean the freedom to obey the law of our being, to grow to our natural self fulfilment, to find out naturally and freely our harmony with our environment.”¹⁴⁷ Unity does not hinder but help this liberty. Even after achieving spiritual and psychological unity the individual seeks complete and free development and this is only realised when others also develop freely. Hence in the ideal unification of mankind the human beings will be allowed freedom to form communities based on social, cultural and economic convenience and there will be no external compulsion upon them. It is essential for human unity that there should be such an organisation of free and natural communities that there may be no place for internal conflict,

opposition, repression and revolt. Thus it is clear that no human unity can be established by the use of force, whether that of a nation or of some world organisation. Sri Aurobindo, therefore, is against the idea of world state because the power of the state always acts through external pressure, law, police and army. This again cannot be achieved through any type of international law. Its only basis will be the *dharma*, reason, will and conscious principles of various nations. Those who imagine a world state for the establishment of human unity, forget that it involves the same difficulties that arise due to state authority in a particular society. Like Karl Marx and Prince Kropotkin Sri Aurobindo also ultimately envisages a stateless society. Thus there appears to be hardly any advantage in the establishment of a world state.

Diversity in Unity

Those who imagine a world state or a world nation in which the individuality of the nations will be abolished, forget that uniformity is nowhere the principle of life. In Nature there is diversity in unity and this principle is particularly important in the biological world. It is for this reason that too much centralisation is considered to be unnatural in human society and, on the other hand, most of the political thinkers support decentralisation. Underlying this diversity is the principle that each individual and each group has to grow according to its own *Swadharma* and nature. Therefore, according to Sri Aurobindo, "The unity of human race to be entirely sound and in consonance with the deepest laws of life must be founded on free groupings, and the groupings again must be the natural associations of free individuals." "This diversity among human groups or the freedom of different nations should be realised in the different aspects of culture such as language, literature and art etc.

Hence Sri Aurobindo has supported the growth of a national language in each nation. He agrees that the English language has helped us in maintaining our contact with other societies but insists that it can never be a substitute for the national language. This is equally true of other constituents of culture.

World Federation of Nations

Ever since man pondered over the ideal of human unity, the idea of federation of nations of some type or the other has been in his mind. After the First World War, the League of Nations

was established. The idea of the League was in tune with the principle of unity in diversity but due to several causes it could not save the world from the Second World War. In his treatise *The Ideal of Human Unity* Sri Aurobindo has analysed these causes in detail. The United Nations Organisation was established after Second World War. As to how far this world organisation will be able to save human society is a matter of discussion but since a future world war would be fatal to the very existence of mankind, Sri Aurobindo has tried to suggest ways by which the aims and objectives of U.N.O. can be achieved. So far as the question of principles of human unity is concerned, these are eternal. If the U.N.O. fails to achieve these principles it will meet the fate of League of Nations. Clarifying the conditions of a free world organisation Sri Aurobindo has written, "A free world-union must in its very nature be a complex unity based on a diversity and that diversity must be based on free self-determination."¹⁴⁹ No mechanical unity can be established in a world organisation. Each nation should join it by its own free will. For this no pressure should be exercised on any one since such pressure is against the ideal of self-determination. Man's aim is to establish a world culture in which each national culture gets fullest opportunity for development. This is possible only when no nation is under the pressure of any other nation and each enjoys local, territorial and regional freedom.

According to Sri Aurobindo, "Internationalism is the attempt of the human mind and life to grow out of the national idea and form and even in a way to destroy it in the interest of the larger synthesis of mankind."¹⁵⁰ Sri Aurobindo is against this type of internationalism. It is not the true ideal of human unity. In true internationalism, nationalism will not be eliminated but fulfilled. The idea of internationalism was born in 18th century and since then political thinkers have presented several alternatives to it. With the increase in international contacts due to the progress of science, opinion has grown in favour of internationalism. Today many consider themselves as citizens of one world along with their membership of a particular nation. It is generally thought that the idea of internationalism is the result of the fear of war. "But", as Sri Aurobindo has rightly pointed out, "we cannot rely too greatly on ideas and resolutions formed in a moment of abnormal crisis under the violent stress of exceptional circumstances."¹⁵⁷ True human unity, therefore, should be based upon

the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. The basic idea behind it is the fundamental unity of all men. The geographical distance between different nations is no hindrance to it since the distance has been very much reduced by modern scientific inventions.

The Religion of Humanity

Hence if the ideal of human unity has to be realised, it should not be based on external pressures, laws and mechanical principles but on the religion of humanity. This religion of humanity will perform the same function in the formation of world-nation as has been always done by the sentiment of nationality in the formation of nations. It will raise men up from narrow egoism and establish their unity with others. Underlying the religion of humanity is the idea that humanity is the greatest god and the family, state or nation cannot replace it. On the other hand, family, state or nation are valuable only to the extent they are helpful in the realisation of human unity. The basic principle underlying the religion of humanity is, "Man must be sacred to man regardless of all distinctions of race, creed, colour, nationality, status, political or social advancement."¹² The principle of non-violence is included in the idea of human sanctity. The sanctity of man means sanctity of human body, life, heart, mind etc., all of which must be respected and each should get opportunity for free development. Fraternity is the basis of the religion of humanity. Without its growth, the ideal of human unity cannot be achieved. This fraternity among human beings is based on the fact that liberty, equality and unity are the eternal traits of the human soul.

Sri Aurobindo has said, "In other words – and this is the conclusion at which we arrive – while it is possible to construct a precarious and quite mechanical unity by political and administrative means, the unity of human race, even if achieved, can only be secured and can only be made real if the religion of humanity, which is at present the highest active ideal of mankind, spiritualises itself and becomes the general inner law of human life."¹³ In the path of the achievement of the ideal of human unity, there will be difficulties greater than those faced in the evolution of nations. But just as nations evolved to fulfil the purpose of Nature similarly a world nation will also evolve overcoming all these difficulties. If man fails to find out a way to achieve this purpose, Nature may take some other step to achieve

it. But the establishment of human unity on this earth is faith sufficiently grounded in the very natus of Nature. U.N.O. has failed to achieve this ideal due to several causes. In fact, all the nations have not succeeded so far in securing a place in it. In recent years a lacuna has been removed by giving communist China a seat in the U.N.O. This world organisation has become an aristocracy because of the power of veto vested in the five permanent members of the Security Council. Another big impediment in the way of human unity is the division of the nations of the world into two big blocs, fundamentally opposed to each other. Without the resolution of this chasm, the sentiment for international unity cannot develop in a true sense.

Sri Aurobindo's faith in the ideal of human unity is based upon his theory of evolution. If man is an evolving being, he will gradually evolve to world nation as he has evolved upto nation because nation is not the ultimate and final unit. The affiliations among different nations may fulfil only some temporary needs but these groups cannot be considered to be ultimate and final units. The very process of evolution in Nature will take us towards the ideal of human unity. To quote Sri Aurobindo, "We may rely, if on the evolutionary urge and, if on no other greater hidden power, on the manifest working and drift or intention in the world-energy we call Nature to carry mankind at least as far as the necessary next step to be taken, a self-preserving next step: for the necessity is there, at least some general recognition of it has been achieved and of the thing to which it must eventually lead the idea has been born and the body of it is already calling for its creation."¹⁵⁴

In consonance with this faith in the evolution of human unity as the purpose of Nature, Sri Aurobindo has made some practical suggestions for making the U.N.O. a success. In the beginning, the U.N.O. should satisfy the following conditions."¹⁵⁵

1. All the nations should voluntarily join it.
2. Justice and truth should be its bases.
3. Its constitution should be such as is likely to resolve international problems.
4. A permanent central powerful authority should be organised by it which should be sanctioned by all the nations.

By fulfilling the above-mentioned conditions the U.N.O. may help in making human unity a reality. But in the end this ideal can be realised only after the establishment of a true soul in place of the disintegrating ego in mankind. In other words, only in a spiritual human society can the ideal of human unity be realised. And so long as we live isolated from true spirituality, this ideal will not be permanently realised.

Thus while discussing the various aspects of the ideal of human unity, Sri Aurobindo has always kept his eyes fixed on the inner purpose of Nature behind the human social and political problems. Whatever happens in the world is due to the forces of the cosmic Nature working behind man. These forces can be discovered by an analysis of our past and present and on their basis we can form an idea of the future of man.

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Individual and Society

It is on the foundation of the unity of man in Divine, that Sri Aurobindo has developed his social philosophy. This aim is beyond nationalism and even beyond internationalism and all sorts of mental relations. It is based on the fundamental essence of all existence. Man is not the end in himself nor is he the end of Nature. Both Nature as well as Man aim at Divine. The true desideratum is the transformation of the entire human race. This gnostic society shall be based on the same principles as we have seen in case of the gnostic individuals. As Sri Aurobindo points out, "A collective life of this kind must obviously constitute itself on the same principle as the life of the gnostic individual."¹⁵⁶ This, however, does not mean the abolition of national peculiarities. There shall be a considerable free diversity between gnostic beings as well as between their different communities. To understand Sri Aurobindo's speculations about the future destiny of man, we must look it in the background of his integral philosophy. The Absolute is not a dead unity but unity rich with diversity. The gnostic society shall be based on principles of unity, mutuality and harmony. "Unity is the gnostic consciousness, mutuality the natural result of its direct awareness of oneness in diversity, harmony the inevitable power of the working of its force."¹⁵⁷ All discords of the mental level shall be reconciled in supramental status.

Modern social and political ideals move in the individualistic and collectivistic groves. On the one side are the Marxists and Fascists advocating the supremacy of state over individual. On the other side are the democrats and anarchists who emphasise the freedom of individual. In between these, there are many other forms of ideologies bending on this or that side, advocating monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy or any other form of state and society. The problems facing us in social and political fields have been unsuccessfully approached from various standpoints. Sri Aurobindo advances a spiritual solution, which is quite consistent with experience and coherent with reason. As in the case of the individual so in the case of society, unity and harmony can be attained only through the inner principle which is also universal and transcendent. As Sri Aurobindo says, "Our aim must be to be perfect as God in His being and bliss is perfect, pure as He is pure, blissful as He is blissful, and, when we are ourselves siddhas in purna-Yoga to bring all mankind to the same divine perfection."¹⁵⁸

While Karl Marx concentrates on the external form of evolution, Sri Aurobindo goes deeper and finds out its inherent spiritual nature. Matter is spirit in disguise. Time is the time of Timeless. The processes of Nature and history can be truly understood only in the light of their inherent divine teleology. The wider and more comprehensive theory is the more true. As in Metaphysics, so in the field of social or political philosophy, Sri Aurobindo would not reject any theory downright, but emphasise its merits within specified limitations. It is only when these limits are crossed that the theories cease to be fruitful and sometimes even positively misleading. What is required is not a new theory but a whole view, which may find a reasonable place for all issues and at the same time see these problems in the wider perspective of the ultimate nature of Reality. The truth of any theory depends on its coherence in the entire scheme of the world since all problems are inter-related. Dialectical materialism and Hegelian Absolutism are two faces of the same truth. The ideal theory must aim at the perfection of the entire man and the entire human race. This, however, is not possible unless it is also the purpose of the Divine in Nature. Pessimism leads to a philosophy of doom, which is neither justified by reason nor corroborated by experience. Man's destiny lies in the fulfilment of divine purpose and the purpose of Divine is the fulfilment of man and Nature in Him.

Thus, in Sri Aurobindo's theory, the individual should owe allegiance neither to state nor to society but to Divine. It is the clash of different loyalties which is responsible for most of the problems of human relations. The Divine, however, is not a negation of these relations but an affirmation of all of them, since all is He. But this is the ideal of the highest stage. So long as man is undeveloped, he must follow the rules of society. Sri Aurobindo, in his truly integral spirit, is against all kinds of extreme individualism, anarchism as well as totalitarianism. As the man develops, he becomes more and more free, but the individual freedom is not contrary to universal interests. As the individual becomes more perfect, so the society. Man has gradually to perfect his physical, vital and mental being, transcending each towards a higher value, till he arrives at the true self and governs and perfects all by it. Sri Aurobindo's is a synthesis of East and West, ancient and modern, since 'spirit' which is the master word of his philosophy, integrates all in a higher synthesis. He advocates the ancient Indian ideal of liberation but in the spirit of the modern West, places it on a democratic level.

Our present materialistic civilization is threatening to return to the barbaric stage. The watchful statesmen and political philosophers look towards religion and morality for the solution of the world crisis. But until there is a fundamental change in the mental consciousness, all such efforts are mere patch-works. Sri Aurobindo has developed this theme in several of his important works, mainly in *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*. He not only warns us of the danger but presents a comprehensive solution of the malady. Mechanisation or rationalisation may lead to more material efficiency but it is likely to sap the spiritual resources of mankind and if this spiritual nucleus is abandoned, man must either relapse to barbaric stage or disappear as an evolutionary failure. Science and ethics, philosophy and religion have failed to present a final solution. Here Sri Aurobindo points us to yoga. Spirituality alone can solve our individual and social problems. Integral yoga is the only remedy and the sole issue. To achieve a permanent evolutionary success, man must become Divine. An integral surrender to the Divine, a perfect consecration and concentration is the only need. The rest shall be done by the Divine Himself. This is the buoyant optimism, which supported by a comprehensive reason and integral experience guides the entire philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

CRITICAL EVALUATION

1. *A Revival of Upanisadic Philosophy:* Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is a return to Upanisads. Indian philosophy, in Sri Aurobindo, comes to itself after such a long chequered history. The course, however, has not been useless. Nature progresses through extremes, so does thought. Dvaita, Advaita and Visistadvaita and all other approaches, one-sided though they may be, bring to light a particular aspect of reality. Their only mistake is the deification of part as whole. Sri Aurobindo accepts all of them but also points out their limits. His is a philosophy of absolute affirmation.

2. *An Integral View:* This is the integral approach which rejects none but takes all in its higher synthesis. In philosophy, religion, psychology, ethics as well as education and all other branches of human knowledge, Sri Aurobindo emphasises the whole man, the man together with Nature and the Spirit which equally manifests in man, world and God. The generating insight behind Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is the integral experience of Sacchidananda. Whatever is real, since nothing is outside the Absolute. Sacchidananda does not falsify its appearances but guarantees their reality. Self is true in Absolute. Man is as much real as God. Human love is not ignorance but a stepping stone to Divine love. All this, however, is not a reasoned conviction based on comparative study of thinking. Integral philosophy is based on integral yoga, an integral realisation of Sacchidananda.

3. *Integral Method:* The method of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is integral. The philosopher has not only to know but to be. To be is to know. Thus, philosophy is close to life. Science, religion, metaphysics and ethics, all have their *swadharma*, all are equally indispensable steps to the Divine. Spiritual intuition finds place for all types of intuitions. But this should not lead us to minimise the necessity of clarification of the concepts. It is this which is responsible for so many conflicting views in philosophy. This again, has led philosophers to use alien methods in the field of philosophy. Philosophy, as the name suggests, is a love of wisdom. The more comprehensive is the more wise. Hence, philosophy should include all types of experiences. This, however, requires an integral realisation, and an integral method to achieve it.

4. *Integral Yoga:* Such is the integral yoga. As philosophy moved away from life, it was led to its *reductio ad absurdum* in

logical analysis, giving birth to anti-metaphysics. Spiritual experience is the life breath of all true philosophy and also its culmination. Indian philosophers have always been in search of some method to realise the ultimate. These, however, have been always one-sided. Integral yoga is an approach through whole being. It not only implies ascent but also makes for the descent of Divine on earth. Its aim is not only individual but cosmic salvation, not only release but psychicisation and supramentalization. It synthesise all other types of yoga and advances upon them to arrive at a complete technique to realize Reality in its integrity.

5. *Integral Psychology* : Sri Aurobindo lays the foundation of a new psychology, which seeks to unravel many hidden powers and faculties of man. It also serves as a basis for the meeting of the extremes in psychology. Methods should change to suit the phenomenon under enquiry. There are no panaceas in psychology or philosophy. As in philosophy so in psychology, Sri Aurobindo does not reject other theories. He only points out their limits and seeks to synthesise them to arrive at a truly integral view. His is a scientific method of constant comparison, observation and new experiments.

6. *Systematisation is Unphilosophical* : Sri Aurobindo is neither a sceptic nor a dogmatist. Human knowledge can never claim to arrive at any sort of finality. Knowledge is always growing to wider and more comprehensive truth. Hence systematisation in philosophy is unphilosophical. Sri Aurobindo believes in an evergrowing knowledge, always prepared to improve, modify and even change. He is a catholic approach. In religion as well as in philosophy, Sri Aurobindo finds reason for every view.

7. *Integral Religion* : In consistency with his theory of spiritual evolution, Sri Aurobindo expounds an integral religion. Such a religion finds place for every kind of religion in the hierarchy of spiritual development. Religion satisfies a fundamental need and is indispensable. But its present form needs reformation. The more spiritual a religion the better it is, for spirituality is its goal. Mysticism is the acme of all religion but it needs to be universalised and clarified. Yet, to Sri Aurobindo, religion is a mere transitory stage.

There is no religion of superman. Religion is a halfway house from mind to spirit. But to make man enter spirituality, it must give place to yoga. Not religion but yoga is the way to Divine.

Yoga, however does not annihilate religion, philosophy or science, but finds place for all of them and utilises them as instruments for God realisation.

8. *Nature of Spirituality* : Perhaps the greatest contribution of Sri Aurobindo is the revelation of the true nature of spirituality. Upanisads and Gita also had an integral view of Spirit, but it was Sri Aurobindo, who for the first time, discovered subtle distinctions, in the realm of spirit and Divine an integral yoga for its achievement. As he points out, Brahman consciousness is only a lower grade in the march to Sacchidananda. Thus, Absolute is Parabrahman. Even supermind is above Brahman. Sri Aurobindo claims to have reached Brahman consciousness much earlier than supramental. There are many luminous levels from mind to supermind. But, unlike Hegel and others, Sri Aurobindo never claims to arrive at an absolute philosophy or an experience of the Absolute as such. Sri Aurobindo, for the first time, emphasises role of psychicization and integration in Spirit. The concept of Spirit is not new in philosophy. One finds it in Hegel, Croce, Samkara, Bradley and many others in East and West, but nowhere we find a truly integral view. Spirit, according to Sri Aurobindo, integrates and transforms physical, vital as well as mental. Hence, Spiritual philosophy finds place for all kinds of experience.

9. *Logic of the Infinite* : Spiritual experience cannot be justified by finite logic. Spirit is known through identity of consciousness and not through mind. Hence, its logic should be a logic of consciousness which is one and infinite, though in it unity does not annihilate multiplicity. Sri Aurobindo's logic of Infinite justifies his spiritual philosophy. The logic itself is not new, as one finds its traces in Upanisads and also elsewhere, but it is Sri Aurobindo who for the first time so boldly distinguished between infra-rational and supra-rational and established the foundation of a true logic of philosophy. Logic must adapt to experience and not *vice versa*. Not reason but a higher intuition and experience, is the judge of any intuition and experience. In the field of the Infinite reason has the pious duty to describe as faithfully as possible, the experience of consciousness. This new logic, however, does not reject other logics, but finds out their limitation. Sri Aurobindo seeks to distinguish between different types of experiences and the different types of logic required to justify them. Thus, integral philosophy is rational and self-consistent.

10. *Synthesis of Philosophy and Religion* : In the tradition of the Upanisads, Sri Aurobindo admits the claims of both philosophy and religion for the regeneration of man. Both are equally indispensable on mental level though as man transcends himself they would give place to supramental knowledge and supramental delight. Hence the conception of ultimate Reality must satisfy both philosophy and religion. It must be both theoretically consistent and practically realisable. A philosophy which subordinates God to Absolute or assigns it only a phenomenal reality, has no place for religion and hence falls short of the complete truth. Again, since neither infra-mental nor mental, nor both together is the whole man, both should be integrated in Spirit. Hence Sri Aurobindo subordinates philosophy and religion to yoga.

One should, however, note that here subordination does not mean negation or even derogation. New field of enquiry requires new methods. Philosophy, religion and even science and ethics are supreme in their own fields. But, for the realisation of Spirit, yoga is indispensable.

11. *The Message of Gnostic Stage* : In consistency with his general scheme of evolution, Sri Aurobindo proclaims the advent of the gnostic stage. Like all serious thinkers he takes cognisance of the present crisis in human civilisation and warns us of the danger. The remedy which he suggests is the transition of man to superman and his entire life was a dedication to this cause. However pessimistic the present state may be, Sri Aurobindo's optimism is not without reason. The whole thing is consistent with the general scheme. Sri Aurobindo himself never insists on the exactness of the details but only on the bare outline. Man has experimented with so many solutions. Theoretically speaking, Sri Aurobindo presents a more consistent solution and there is every reason to hope that practically also it would prove to be better, if it is given a chance to present its credentials.

12. *The Philosophy of our Age* : Thus, Sri Aurobindo's is the philosophy of our age. It represents all the crying needs of the time. It is an integral synthesis of old and new, East and West, realism and idealism, pragmatism and spiritualism. The static, a cosmic and idealistic theories have led to escapism, pessimism and socio-political disintegration. A 'Weltanschauung', which finds a place for all the aspects of human life and welds all knowledge in an integral whole, can alone serve humanity. Sri Aurobindo

shows the way in this direction. It is left for the future philosophers to follow the outlines and develop a philosophy worthy of its name, truly performing its role in the regeneration of the human race.

Notes and References

1. Sri Aurobindo, *Ideal and Progress*, p. 56.
2. "The heart and the mind are universal Deity and neither a mind without heart nor a heart without mind is the human ideal." — Sri Aurobindo, *Views and Reviews*.
3. "Science takes possession of the measures and utilities of force, rational philosophy pursues reason to its last subtleties, but inspired philosophy and religion can seize hold of the highest secret, *uttamam rahasyam*." — Sri Aurobindo, *Heraclitus*, p. 60.
4. Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 191.
5. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 654.
6. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 350.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 350.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 440-42.
9. Sri Aurobindo, *The Riddle of this world*, p. 24.
10. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, IInd Series, p. 298.
11. Sri Aurobindo, *Lights on Yoga*, p. 37.
12. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. III, Second Edition, p. 713.
13. Sri Aurobindo, *Evolution* p. 29.
14. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Second Edition, p. 42.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
18. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Second Edition, p. 43.
19. "If the means of knowledge are indirect and imperfect, the knowledge attained will also be indirect and imperfect." — Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 258.
20. Bergson, S., *Creative Evolution*, p. 251.
21. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 163.
22. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Second Edition, p. 211.
23. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 663.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 562.
25. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 446.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 448.
27. Sri Aurobindo, *Lights on Yoga*, p. 35.
28. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 36.
29. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters*, Ist Series, p. 82.

30. Sri Aurobindo, *The Advent*, Vol. XI, No. 2, p. 21.
31. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. XI, No. 2, p. 22.
32. Sri Aurobindo, *The Advent*, Vol. XI, No. 2, p. 22.
33. *Ibid.*
34. "We must state what we see as best as we can, but need not dispute what others see or state; rather we must accept and in our own system locate and account for what they have seen and stated." Sri Aurobindo, *ibid.*, p. 21.
35. Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Karmayogin*, pp. 54-55.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 717-18.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 713.
39. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 441.
40. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 45.
41. Sri Aurobindo, *Ideal and Progress*, p. 16-17.
42. "The individual therefore exists though he exceeds the little separative ego, the universal exists and is embraced by him but it does not absorb and abolish all individual differentiation, even though by his universalising himself, the limitation which we call the ego is overcome." — Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 92-93.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
44. Sri Aurobindo, *Letters*, 1st Series, p. 137.
45. Sri Aurobindo, *Lights on Yoga*, p. 29.
46. *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, No. 6, August 1947, p. 38.
47. Sri Aurobindo, *Lights on Yoga*, pp. 56-57.
48. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 629.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 637.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 551.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 565-66.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 571.
53. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Second Edition, p. 88.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
56. "Lila, the play, the child's joy, the poet's joy, the actor's joy, the mechanician's joy of the soul of things eternally young, perpetually inexhaustible, creating and recreating Himself in Himself for the sheer bliss of that self-creation, of that self-representation, Himself the play, Himself the player, Himself the Playground." — Sri Aurobindo, *ibid.* Vol. I, 11nd edition, p. 124.
57. Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, p. 66.
58. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, Second Edition, p. 181.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
60. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Second Edition, p. 22.
61. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Second Edition, p. 174.
62. "The Supramental and Supracosmic are not the same." — Sri Aurobindo, *Letters*, 1st Series, p. 101.

63. "I entered the Brahman-Consciousness in three days, but for the Supramental it took a decade." — Sri Aurobindo, *Mother India*, August, 1962, p. 6.
64. *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, IInd Edition, p. 318.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
66. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Second Edition, p. 788.
67. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 788.
68. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Second Edition, p. 344.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 330.
70. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Second Edition, p. 807.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 808.
72. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 92.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
76. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Second Edition, p. 372.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 375.
78. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 384.
79. Sri Aurobindo, *The Renaissance in India*, p. 80.
80. Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 160.
81. Sri Aurobindo, *Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 103.
82. Underhill, E., *Mysticism*, p. 86.
83. Plotinus, *The Neo-Platonists*, p. 103.
84. Quoted by A.B. Roy, *The World Crisis*, p. 134.
85. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 696.
86. Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, p. 220.
87. Sri Aurobindo, *Thoughts and Glimpses*, p. 39.
88. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 726.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 692.
90. "It is not sufficient to worship Krishna, Christ or Buddha without, if there is not the revealing and the formulation of the Buddha, the Christ or Krishna in ourselves." — Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 74.
91. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 872.
92. *Ibid.*, pp. 888-94.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 650.
94. "Philosophy, intellectual expression of the Truth may remain, but mainly as a means of expressing this greater discovery and as much of its contents as can at all be expressed in mental terms to those who still live in the mental intelligence." — Sri Aurobindo, *The Riddle of This World*, p. 26.
95. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 713.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 715.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 896.
98. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 4.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 34

101. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
102. "The data of philosophy are the supports from which it begins in the realisation of God through the principles of his beings, only it carries the intelligent understanding which is all philosophy, gives into an intensity which carries it beyond thought and vision and beyond understanding into realisation and possession, what philosophy leaves abstract and remote, it brings into a living nearness and spiritual concreteness" — Sri Aurobindo, *ibid.*, p. 589.
103. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 92.
104. "Philosophy is of little help in getting true knowledge which must come from experience and actual realisation. It serves as a mental exercise, it makes the mind supple and clear, it gives ideas to the mind that there is a something higher than itself to which it should aspire, thus it serves as a sort of springing board" — Sri Aurobindo, Quoted in *Mother India*, August 1952, p. 5.
105. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 628.
106. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 840.
107. Sri Aurobindo, *The Renaissance in India*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry (1951), pp. 67-68.
108. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, American Edition, p. 787.
109. Bradley, F.H., *Appearance and Reality*, Preface.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 436.
111. Muirhead, J.H., *The Elements of Ethics*, p. 137.
112. "Above the ethical plane lie the religious and philosophical planes. Gandhi's aim is humble and his ideal is fixed only at the moral level". — Ray. B.G., *Gandhian Ethics*, p. 7.
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118. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
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122. Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1950, p. 10.
123. Sri Aurobindo, *Bhaucent Mandir*, Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual Jayanti Number 15, August 15, 1956.
124. Sri Aurobindo, *Speeches*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, Third Edition, 1952, p. 4.
125. Sri Aurobindo, *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, p. 83.
126. *Ibid.*, pp. 177-78.
127. Sri Aurobindo, *Speeches*, p. 6.
128. Quoted by S.K. Maitra, *Sri Aurobindo and Indian Freedom*, Sri Aurobindo Library, Madras, 1948.
129. Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle* (1950), pp. 37-38.

130. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
131. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.
132. Sri Aurobindo, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondicherry, 1950, p. 8.
133. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
134. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
135. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
136. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
137. *Ibid.*, p. 62-63.
138. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
139. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
140. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
141. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
142. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
143. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
144. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
145. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
146. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
147. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
148. *Ibid.*, p. 297.
149. *Ibid.*, p. 331.
150. *Ibid.*, p. 341.
151. *Ibid.*
152. *Ibid.*, p. 364.
153. *Ibid.*, p. 370.
154. *Ibid.*, p. 399.
155. *Ibid.*, Postscript Chapter 1.
156. *Ibid.*, p. 898.
157. *Ibid.*, p. 901.
158. Sri Aurobindo, *The Advent*, Vol. II, p. 16.

7

MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI

On the occasion of the Second Round Table Conference, when Gandhi went to Europe and was staying with Pierre Ceresole, the originator of the International Voluntary Service for Peace in Switzerland, he was asked by Pierre, "Tell us what qualities you think a leader for this age would need". Gandhi replied, "Realisation of God every minute of the twenty four hours."¹

Man's ultimate end, according to Gandhi, is God realisation. His assumptions with regard to God are based upon the philosophy of the Upanisads and Gita. God is bliss, God is truth, light, love and fearlessness. He, too, obeys his own laws. God is not an individual. He is the soul of the beings and the universe. Man is free only to choose his actions, their results are independent of him. Gandhi's thoughts about the freedom of man are grounded in the Gita. Soul, though not God, is inseparable from it. Gandhi was a staunch supporter of world brotherhood as a consequence of his belief in one God present in all living beings. Going a step further, by believing in the existence of God in every living being, Gandhi's theory of non-violence has become extremely comprehensive. His theories of public service and non-violence are based on religious philosophy. In his words, "My duty is service of God and therefore service of humanity."

Impressions of Bhagwad Gita

Towards the end of his second year in England Gandhi came across two Theosophist-brothers. They talked to him about Bhagwad Gita. They were reading Sir Edwin Arnold's translation *The Song Celestial* – and they invited him to read the original with them. Gandhi was constrained to tell them that he had not read the Gita, but he read the Gita with them. The verses in the second chapter:

If one

Ponders on objects of the sense, there springs
Attraction; from attraction grows desire,
Desire flames to fierce passion, passion breeds
Recklessness; then the memory — all betrayed —
Lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind,

Till purpose, mind, and man are all undone.

made a deep impression on his mind. To quote his own words, "The book struck me as one of priceless worth. The impression has ever since been growing on me with the result that I regard it today as the book *par excellence* for the knowledge of Truth. It has afforded me invaluable help in my moments of gloom."²

Other Religious Influences

The brothers also recommended *The Light of Asia* by Sir Edwin Arnold, and he read it with even greater zeal than he did the *Bhagwadgita*. They also took him on one occasion to the Blavatsky Lodge and introduced him to Madam Blavatsky and Mrs. Annie Besant. At the brothers' instance Gandhi read Madame Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy*. This book stimulated in him the desire to read books on Hinduism.

About the same time he met a good Christian from Manchester in a vegetarian boarding house. He talked to him about Christianity. Gandhi began reading Bible, but he could not possibly read through the Old Testament. He read *Book of Genesis*.

But the New Testament produced a deep impression upon him especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to his heart. He compared it with the Gita. The verses, "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away thy coat let him have thy cloak too," delighted him beyond measure and put him in mind of Shamal Bhatt's 'For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal' etc. His young mind tried to unify the teaching of the *Gita*, *The Light of Asia* and the *Sermon on the Mount*. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to him greatly.

This reading whetted his appetite for studying the lives of other religious teachers. A friend recommended Carlyle's *Heroes*

and Hero-Worship. He read the chapter on the Hero as a prophet and learnt of the Prophet's greatness and bravery and austere living. In his *Autobiography* Gandhi has narrated how God saved him on several occasions. He realised that, "A knowledge of religion, as distinguished from experience, seems but chaff in such moment of trial."³

About the period of his stay in England Gandhi writes, "I did not then know the essence of religion or of God, and how He works in us. Only vaguely I understood that God had saved me on that occasion. On all occasions of trial He has saved me. I know that the phrase 'God saved me' has a deeper meaning for me today, and still I feel that I have not yet grasped its entire meaning. Only richer experience can help me to a fuller understanding. But in all my trials – of a spiritual nature, as a lawyer, in conducting institutions, and in politics – I can say that God saved me." Underlining the value of faith in God Gandhi writes, "When every hope is gone, when helpers fail and comforts flee, I find that help arrives somehow, from I know not where. Supplication, worship, prayer are no superstitions; they are acts more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting or walking. It is no exaggeration to say that they alone are real, all else is unreal."⁴ About the value of prayer and worship he writes, "Such worship or prayer is no flight of eloquence, it is no liphomage. It springs from the heart. If, therefore, we achieve that purity of the heart when it is 'emptied of all but love', if we keep all the chords in proper tune, they 'trembling pass in music out of sight'. Prayer needs no speech. It is in itself independent of any sensuous effort. I have not the slightest doubt that prayer is an unfailing means of cleansing the heart of passions. But it must be combined with the utmost humility."⁵

METAPHYSICS

Concept of Truth

Truth is the corner-stone of the edifice of Gandhi's Metaphysics. Every page of his *Autobiography*, through its "calm simple language", testifies to the love of truthfulness ingrained in him ever since his boyhood. The explanation of the 'vow of truth', as part of the Ashram ideal and practice, opened with the words: "Not simply as we ordinarily understand it, not truth which merely answers the saying, 'Honesty is the best policy,' implying

that if it is not the best policy we may depart from it. Here Truth as it is conceived means that we may have to rule our life by this law of Truth at any cost."⁶ One of the corollaries of this law, in Gandhi's view, is that we must say 'Yes' only when we mean 'Yes', and 'we must say 'No' when we mean 'No', regardless of consequences."⁷

Truthfulness in Thought, Word and Deed

The next corollary which occupies a most important place in Gandhi's scheme of ethical values and has besides a universal application, is the uniformity or harmony – or 'co-operation', to use his own words – between thought, word and deed at any given moment. To think one thing, speak another, and do a third is untruth. To mean 'no' and say 'yes', to give word and not keep it, to nurse ill-will in the mind and utter honied words, to flatter a man to his face and malign him behind his back, to be fasting outwardly and think all the while of the prospective rich fare, to consider a thing to be reprehensible and yet do it, are all examples of disharmony in thought, word and deed, and therefore of untruth, and are characteristics of an evil man, as the adage goes.

Concept of God

God, according to M.K. Gandhi is the ultimate reality both in Metaphysics and religion. "I believe in God much more than I believe in the fact that you and I are alive and I am speaking to you," said he in 1934 to a group of Harijan sceptics. "I may give you an illustration of what, I mean. In appearance, I am speaking to you and you are listening to me. In reality, your hearts and minds may be somewhere else. My heart also may be somewhere else. Then my speaking and your listening, though they are an appearance, may not be a reality. But my heart, word and deed are pledged to the Being called God, Allah, Rama or Krishna. You will now easily recognise that it is true when I say that my belief in God is far more a reality to me than this meeting which I am addressing."

God is Truth

"God is truth," Gandhi used to say till 1931, since when he began to say: "Truth is God."⁸ For, averred he, "Denial of God we have known. Denial of Truth we have not known. The most ignorant among mankind have some truth in them. We are all

sparks of Truth. The sum total of those sparks is indescribable, as-yet, Unknown Truth, which is God."⁹ Even the atheist believes in Truth; therefore Gandhi said: "He is the atheism of the atheist."¹⁰ This definition he explained as follows: "Truth is God – nothing else, nothing less. The nearest word answering to Truth in Sanskrit is *Sat*. *Sat* means being. God alone is *Sat*. He alone is, nothing and no one else is. Everything else is illusion. *Satya* means *sat*. Truth alone is, nothing and no one else is. Truth alone is in the world, nothing else is. This is easy enough to understand. Then what is truth for us it is a relative term. Absolute Truth is God. Whatever we understand by God is implied in Truth."¹¹

Truth as Sacchidanand

"Are there any other characteristics of Truth"? he was asked. "It alone really sustains us," he replied. "For a time many other things may sustain us, but this alone sustains us for all time. Truth gives perennial joy. In Sanskrit we have the words *sat*, *chit*, *ananda*. It is a fine combination. The three together make one word. Truth is knowledge also. It is life. You feel vitality in you when you have got truth in you. Again, it gives bliss. It is a permanent thing of which you cannot be robbed. You may be sent to the gallows, or put to torture, but if you have truth in you, you will experience an inner joy."¹²

Description of God

"Do you believe in a personal God?" Gandhi was asked "I don't," he replied. "I don't believe God to be a personal being in the sense that we are personal beings. I understand God to be universal Law. God, however, cannot be described in His fullness. We human beings describe Him in our own vocabulary. God is the Law as well as the Law-giver. The two are one. In Buddhism God is described as the Law. Many people say that Buddhism is atheistic. I have never thought so."

Having plainly admitted that God cannot be described in His fullness and that any description of Him would fall far short of Reality, Gandhi gave various descriptions of Him: "To me God is truth and love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of light and life, and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience...He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us."¹³

Not being a metaphysician, Gandhi has not used two different terms *viz.* Brahman and Ishavara. He used the word 'God' in both the senses, religious as well as metaphysical.

Non-Dualism

Gandhi believed in non-dualism. "I believe in advaita," said he "I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives."¹⁴ "The inner oneness pervades all life. The forms are many, but the informing spirit is one."¹⁵ In the course of the discussion referred to above, Gandhi thus explained his own position: "When we descend to the empirical level, we descend to the world of duality. In God there is no duality. But as soon as we descend to the empirical level we get two forces – God and Satan, as Christianity calls them. Other terms for the two are used in Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Islam."¹⁶

Thus, for M.K. Gandhi God is not 'personal' in the sense that He has human form or limitation or likes and dislikes. He is, however, 'personal' in the sense that he is approachable to man. He is in closest relations with him. He is the spirit dwelling in the inmost recesses of man's heart. Like Shankara Gandhi adopts the formula 'neti neti' (not this, not this); and yet, like Ramanuja, he describes God as perfect truth, perfect non-violence, perfect innocence, etc. – in fact, the perfection of all the virtues known to man. And yet again he says, "That, however, is our own feeling. If man can somehow know God's way of putting things, I don't know what he would say. God is just. Rather say He is not just but merciful. He is just because He is merciful. These, however, are echoes of our own weak feelings.... These are the babblings of an imperfect man."¹⁷

Incarnations of God

Though Gandhi did not deny the existence of the historical personages known as Rama and Krishna, it was not these that he worshipped and prayed to. Rama and Krishna were, to him, incarnations of God, synonymous with perfection. "I know Krishna not as a historical person but as an embodiment of perfection," he said to a Christian audience. Elsewhere he said, "This conception has revolutionized Hinduism. How it acts is more than I can say, and nobody can explain it. The spirit of Hinduism has evolved this idea. Hinduism is still in the process of evolution. In fact all religions are evolving. Hinduism, if not Zoroastrianism, is of all

living religions the oldest. They are all undergoing evolution. Krishna as an incarnation of God has transformed the lives of tens of thousand of men. It is a patent, historical fact. The transformation is going on even at present...It is not Jesus of history who really rules over the lives of Christians, it is the Jesus of their own imagination who does so. The God of my imagination rules my life, and not the God of your imagination."¹⁸ It is for this very reason that Gandhiji liked the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas, a great devotional book, more than Valmiki's *Ramayana*, which is the story of a great hero. "Tulsidas's *Ramayana* is an eternal source of inspiration for him and occupies the same place in his prayers as the *Bhagwad Gita*,"¹⁹ wrote Mahadev Desai.

Good and Evil

The problem of 'good' and 'evil' is one of those arising from thoughts about God. "God's hand is behind good, but in God's hand it is not mere good," said Gandhi: "His hand is behind evil also, but there it is no longer evil. 'Good' and 'evil' is our own imperfect language. God is above both good and evil."²⁰

Gandhi defined evil as follows: "Evil is good or truth misplaced. It has no separate existence at all, but it is only truth or good misplaced."²¹ This brings out the relative nature of both good and evil, which are often found to exchange places. What is 'good' in given times and places may be 'evil' in relation to some other climes and circumstances. This, however, does not obliterate the distinction between 'good' and 'evil'. What is 'good' at a particular time and place is good, and its reverse is evil. The ethical values are eternal. The variation is only in their application with reference to particular contexts. Certain acts – like thefts, fornication, etc. – which have been considered as sins by enlightened humanity all over the world, can never be considered good.

In reply to the question "Is evil also made by God?" Gandhi said: "Nothing can possibly exist without His allowing it. He makes many things inverted which must be put right. We must invert the process."²² "God has given us conscience," Gandhi went on to say: "He has given us the power to do right. If I take your thing with your permission, it is right. If I take it without your permission, it is stealing, and I must put it back in its own place."²³

"The distinction between good and evil thoughts is of our creation. Why should their coming and going make us uneasy?"

a questioner, a bit of a metaphysician, asked Gandhi, who explained his position at some length.

"The distinction is not unimportant," Gandhi said: "Nor do these thoughts come haphazard. They follow some law which the scriptures have tried to enunciate. There are certain problems in mathematics, for the solution of which some workable assumptions have to be made. They help in the solution of the problem. But they are purely imaginary, and have no other practical use. Similarly, psychologists have proceeded upon the assumption that a pair of opposite forces is warring against each other in the universe, of which one is divine and the other devilish...The distinction is made by all the scriptures of the world. I say this distinction is imaginary. God is one, without a second. He alone is. He is indefinable. In reality there is no God who is at war with Satan; but we have imagined that there is a war going on between God and Satan. The author of the *Mahabharata* has described the war between the opposing forces of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, and has advised men to non-co-operate with the latter."

"It is we who entertain thoughts," Gandhi went on to say, "and again it is we ourselves who repulse them. We have thus to strive against ourselves. The scriptures have, therefore, said that there is a duel in the world. This duel is imaginary, not real. We can, however, sustain ourselves in the world only by assuming the existence of the imaginary duel to be real," Gandhi said, clinching the issue.

Identification with God

An ever-present sense of identification with the sinful as well as the virtuous is one of the deductions of the doctrine of 'non-difference', or 'the universality of spirit' (*sarvatmatva*) as Shankara puts it. If the virtuous deserve our homage and worship, the sinful deserve our sympathy and help; for we cannot absolve ourselves altogether from the responsibility of their sinfulness. We are thus co-sharers in their humiliation too, and should cease condemning. Hate the wrong but not the wrong-doer, was the maxim Gandhi derived from this consideration. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," said John.

This sense of identification was a living belief with Gandhi. Explaining this attitude he said, "I believe in the absolute oneness of God, and therefore also of humanity. What though we have

different bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source. I cannot, therefore, detach myself from the wickedest soul, nor may I be denied identity with the most virtuous...we are sons of the same God and partake of the same divine essence, we must partake of the sin of every person, whether he belongs to us or to another race."

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Essentials of Hinduism

The essentials of Hinduism according to Gandhi are: (1) Belief in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures; (2) Avatars or incarnations of God; (3) Rebirth; (4) Varna and Ashrama; (5) Protection of the cow; (6) No disbelief in idol-worship.²⁴

On one occasion Gandhi wrote: "It is the good fortune or the misfortune of Hinduism that it has no official creed. If I were asked to define the Hindu Creed, I should simply say: search after Truth through non violent means. A man may not believe even in God and still call himself a Hindu. Hinduism is a relentless pursuit after Truth."²⁵

Love for Hinduism

Explaining why he was a Hindu, Gandhi said later that he had found Hinduism "to be the most tolerant of all religions known to me. Its freedom from dogma makes a forcible appeal to one. Not being an exclusive religion, it enables the followers of that faith not merely to respect all other religions but it also enables them to admire and assimilate whatever may be good in the other faiths. Non-violence is common to all religions, but it has found the highest expression and application in Hinduism. (I do not regard Jainism or Buddhism as separate from Hinduism)."²⁶

Gandhiji has been described as "a true incarnation of Hindu spirituality and in the direct line of descent from the ancient Rishis."²⁷ "I can no more describe my feeling for Hinduism than for my own wife," said he. "Nothing elates me so much as the music of the *Gita* or the *Ramayana* by Tulsidas, the only two books in Hinduism I may be said to know. When I fancied I was

taking my last breath, the Gita was my solace.”²⁸ Gandhi loved the great Hindu shrines “in spite of their unspeakable failings.”²⁹ “I have no other wish in this world,” he wrote, “but to find light and joy and peace through Hinduism.”³⁰

Removal of Untouchability

Gandhi fought against the curse of untouchability and the success he achieved, resulting in the burial of the monster, will go down in history as one of the greatest efforts ever made for the purification of Hinduism and for the elevation of suppressed humanity. Paying a glowing tribute to this achievement Henry Brailsford has written:

“The campaign of this mystic, who cleaned latrines one day and opened temples the next, is one of the strangest chapters in history and one of the noblest. Has any saint in human memory done more to lighten the misery of the oppressed and restore their self-respect? He had broken a cruel institution that dated from the night of time, based on superstition, buttressed by religion, sanctioned by many conquests and maintained not merely by prejudice, but by physical shrinking. India honours Gandhi today chiefly because he led the fight for independence. Humanity owes him an even heavier debt because he opened the road of the untouchables to freedom.”³⁰

Myriad Names of God

The relation of God to man has not only been variously described in different religions, but different designations have been given to God in the same religion. In reality, God fills the heaven and earth and transcends them; and yet God is the dweller of the inmost recesses of the heart of every being. God is not bound by any human limitations; God therefore transcends speed and thought. God is in the heart of everything and yet above and beyond it. In spite of this knowledge man has tried to describe him in many ways – as Son, Father, Mother, Lover, Beloved, Master, King. These are, after all, similes. Different men have given different similes, in accordance with their own outlook, temperament and inner urge. These, like all similes, have a partial application and are partially true; and every simile in respect of God is empirically true for one who uses it. Querrels over these,

therefore, are futile and needlessly add to misunderstandings and bitterness. Gandhi once reminded his hearers of a Hindu hymn book which enumerates a thousand names of Vishnu. "We are all worshippers of one God, whom we worship under different names,"³² he added.

"The attitude of the cultivated Hindu and the Buddhist to other forms of worship," says Radhakrishnan, "is one of sympathy and respect, and not criticism and contempt for their own sake. This friendly understanding is not inconsistent with deep feeling and thought. Faith for the Hindu does not mean dogmatism. He does not smell heresy in those who are not entirely of his mind. It is not devotion that leads to the assertive temper, but limitation of outlook, hardness and uncharity. While full of unquestioning belief, the Hindu is at the same time devoid of harsh judgment. It is not historically true that in the knowledge of truth there is of necessity great intolerance."³³

The prayer at Gandhi's Ashram at Phoenix in South Africa contained recitations from all religions; and so also in the latter year in India. His Ashram, wherever it was, was a world in miniature. Followers of many religions saw the best in their own religions personified in him. He had learnt this liberality towards all religions from his parents, as he avows in his *Autobiography*.³⁴ "You have a knack of pleasing all gods," said Sardar Patel, laughing to him on one occasion. "Oh, yes," said Gandhi, "that was what my mother taught me. She would ask me to go to the Haveli, and also to the Shiva Temple; and you may be interested to hear that when we were married we were taken to worship not only to all the Hindu shrines but to a fakir's shrine as well!"³⁵

The Essential Unity of Religions

Explaining how he believed all religions to be true and equal, Gandhi put in a nutshell his fundamental belief on the subject as follows:

"That has been my fundamental position for years. Underlying it is the idea that you don't become judges of the world. Differences in the World there have been, and will be. God is all powerful. He appears with many shapes and faces. If we search, we may find as many religions as there are men. Hundreds of men are merely striving to know the Truth. They will put the Truth in their own way. No two men will put it in identical terms. Men would not

put the Truth in identical terms with me. Though I know the God, the All-powerful, resides in every one of us, we are imperfect media. We are all different. No two bodies are identically the same. No two leaves of a tree are identically the same; there is bound to be some difference. Each one prays to God according to his own light. Who am I to judge and say that I pray better than you do? I don't judge the Muslims, Parsis, Christians and Jews. If I am a seeker of truth, it is quite sufficient for me. I cannot say that, because I have seen God in this way, the whole world must see Him in that way. All religions are true and equal. That, however, is not to say that they are equally true in religious terms or are absolutely true. Another man's religion is true for him as mine is for me. I can't be a judge of his religion. That is my fundamental position."³⁶

"I believe Hinduism to be a religion of truth," said he. "But Islam and Christianity also are religions of truth. From your standpoint Christianity is true, Hinduism from my standpoint."³⁷

"I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are all God given, and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths, we should find that they were at the bottom all one and were all helpful to one another."

"There is no religion that is absolutely perfect," he explained. "All are equally imperfect or more or less perfect."³⁸

In his foreword to a book on this subject by Sophia Wadia, M.K. Gandhi wrote, "These essays of Sophia Wadia show at a glance how much similarity there is between the principal faiths of the earth in the fundamentals of life. All our mutual quarrels centre round non-essentials. Sophia Wadia's labours will be amply rewarded if people belonging to different faiths will study faiths other than their own, with the same reverence that she has exhibited in her essays. An understanding of and respect for the great faiths of the world is the foundation of true Theosophy – Wisdom about God."

"How can there be room for distinctions of high and low where there is this all-embracing fundamental unity underlying the outward diversity? For that is a fact meeting you at every step in daily life. The final goal of all religions is to realize this essential oneness."

"The essence of all religions is one; only their approaches are different."

"The Doctrine of the immanence of God in life and history is inconsistent with the theory of unique revelations at particular epoch,"³⁹ says Radhakrishnan.

"Hinduism believes," says Radhakrishnan, "That every guru is a Saviour, inasmuch as he quickens in his disciples the life of God and develops the seed of the spirit of fructifying in them. Anyone who helps us to a complete harmonisation of the finite will of man with the perfect will of God has the power to save us."⁴⁰

In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "There is undoubtedly a Truth, one and eternal, which we are seeking, from which all other truth derives; by the light of which all other truth finds its right place, explanation and relation to the scheme of knowledge. But precisely for that reason it cannot be shut up in a single trenchant formula, it is not likely to be found in its entirety or in all its bearings in any single philosophy or scripture or uttered altogether and for ever by any one teacher, thinker, prophet or avatar. Nor has it been wholly found by us if our view of it necessitates the intolerant exclusion of the truth underlying other systems; for when we reject passionately, we mean that we cannot appreciate and explain."⁴¹

To quote Radhakrishnan: "God meets every aspirant with favour and grants to each his heart's desire. He does not extinguish the hope of any but helps all hopes to grow according to their nature...Name and form are used to reach the Formless. Meditation on any favourite form may be adopted...The same God is worshipped by all. The differences of conception and approach are determined by local colouring and social adaptations. All manifestations belong to the same supreme."⁴²

"We may have our private opinions," said Gandhiji, "but why should they be a bar to the meeting of hearts?" "In non-essentials we differ; in essentials we agree."⁴³ "I have to follow

truth as it appears to me, because I cannot live without it. The truth as it appears to you may be truth for you, but not for others.”⁴⁴

The realization of the need for both unity and diversity – for ‘unity in diversity’ is the law of life – it must teach us not to tolerate but to respect other faiths as our own. The world cannot be refashioned into one country with one religion, one race, one language, one culture. It will at best be a Federation of countries, religions, races, languages, cultures.

To Gandhiji’s mind this obviated the necessity of conversion in the sense of a change of religious labels. Cases of voluntary conversion there might be, but they would be very rare. “The Hindu mass mind,” said he, “won’t take kindly to conversion. If I am able to wean the Muslims or Hindus from the error of conversion, they may give it up. Otherwise they may preach their own religion, but must not convert people by force of arms.”⁴⁵ Gandhiji objected to the mass conversions of Harijans and other poorer classes carried on by Christian missionaries in India. He minced no words in conveying this view to the missionaries whenever they showed their willingness to hear him. He disallowed some of his non-Hindu co-workers to give up their ancestral religion and embrace Hinduism. To one of them, he wrote on 5th March, 1934:

“You don’t need to be a Hindu but a true Jewess. If Judaism does not satisfy you, no other faith will give you satisfaction for any length of time. I would advise you to remain a Jewess and appropriate the good of other faiths.”⁴⁶

Attitude to Christianity

“What part did Jesus play in your life?” This was the stock question put to Gandhi by many Christian friends. “Jesus played a great part in my life,” said he to one such audience, “– unconsciously how much, I do not know; the Sermon on the Mount, I felt the beauty of it, though I am not able to say that it is singular or is not be found in other religions. But the presentation is unique and not to be found in any other faith. In South Africa, at the instance of friends, I had to read a lot of Christian books. I saw the beauties of Christianity. So many of my words have reference to the Bible. I won’t be able to speak without words chosen from Bible. In my talks I can’t avoid referring to it.”⁴⁷

"How does the person of Jesus affect your life?" was another question in reply to which Gandhi said: "Not in any special sense. I don't look upon Jesus as the only son of God. Taken in a literal sense, the idea offends me. In a literal sense God begets no son; or, if He begets at all, He begets not one son. In a spiritual sense you can say so. But in that sense we are all sons of God, if we want to make that claim Jesus was one of the prophets mankind has seen. He is one of the teachers of the world. I don't consider him a special favourite of God. The person of Jesus is a living reality in this sense. But if Jesus lives in this sense, so do other great souls in the world. They affect us because they are still living. Jesus thus is not living in a special sense of the word, distinguished from others."⁴⁸

Thus Gandhi definitely stated his position *vis-a-vis* Christianity: "Today my position is that, though I admire much in Christianity, I am unable to identify myself with orthodox Christianity. I must tell you in all humility that Hinduism as I know it entirely satisfies my soul, fills my whole being, and I find a solace in the *Bhagavadgita* and the Upanishads that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. Not that I do not prize the ideal presented therein, not that some of the precious teachings in the Sermon on the Mount have not left a deep impression upon me, when disappointment stares me in the face, and when I see not one ray of light on the Horizon, I turn to the *Bhagavadgita*."⁴⁹ "Jesus in the East," said Gandhi on another occasion, "brought a breath from the spirit of God and gave it to the world. But the West took hold of it and turned it into a system which I think is not a good one. That is why I do not call myself a Christian."⁵⁰

Attitude to Islam

"Wherein lies the beauty of Islam in your view?" In reply to this question Gandhi said: "The spirit of brotherhood is manifested in no other religion as in Islam. It is no doubt not confined to Muslims. But Islam has been a downright leveller as no other religion has been. It would be much better if the followers of Islam say the whole world is a brotherhood."⁵¹ As he read the Quran, he said to a Muslim audience, "He had felt that this spirit had been extended to the whole human race. Vital unity between Hindus and Muslims was to be reached by right conduct in the widest sense of the term. He was praying all the twentyfour hours for the heart-unity of all communities for whom India was their home."⁵²

In the Agakhan Palace at Poona, in 1942, on the eve of the Ramzan Id, Gandhi declared his intention to take only dates and milk on the next day. Kasturba, when she came to know of this, asked him: "Why are you going to reduce your diet tomorrow?" Gandhiji, who was observing silence, wrote: "Because of the Id. Don't you remember that I once kept the rozah in South Africa for the whole month? This time I have not kept even one rozah. I should therefore deny myself something at least on the Id day. I will take dates and milk which were the Prophet's favourite articles of food, and will give up bread and vegetables which are my favourite articles." That evening Gandhiji saw the crescent moon first of all, and showed it to others. On the Id day he took only uncooked food except boiled milk; and during the evening prayer passages from the Quran were read.⁵³

Value of Scriptures of All the religions

Since 1946 the days were of the greatest trial for Gandhiji, and his faith was put to the severest test. He said, "I wish to tell you all that I can be a good Hindu only if I am a good Parsi and a good Mussalman. Can it be a religious act to revile religions other than one's own? I believe all religions to be essentially one."⁵⁴ Gandhiji gave up the entire prayer at the Valmiki Mandir, Bhangi Colony, New Delhi, when even one voice raised a protest against a passage from the Quran being recited. "I do not give up the prayer out of fear of anybody," he said. "After the prayers once commence, I will not stop it even if I am cut to pieces, and you will then see that till my last breath I will chant the words 'Ram-Rahim', 'Krishna-Karim'.⁵⁵ Later on, notwithstanding the protests from a few among the congregation he had the full prayer including the recitation from the Quran. Both the stoppage and the resumption were actuated by the purest spirit of non-violence. Gandhi did not wish to hurt the feeling of protesters, and yet he would not for ever hurt the sentiment of the bulk of the people present for the sake of a few. Explaining the reason at some length, he said, "If you (the majority) co-operate with me and observe non-violence, I can tell you with confidence that the non-violence will be invincible. The condition, however, is that you must follow my instruction implicitly. You must assure me that you will exercise restraint and will refrain not only from any overt action but from harbouring anger even in your minds. The protest against the recitation from the Quran is an outcome of gross ignorance...If anyone expresses his unwillingness to hear

the prayer, I would still have the prayer and also the post-prayer speech. Nevertheless, I stop the prayer because I cannot put up with any of you handling the protesters roughly. If I am alone, on this spot, and five persons come and threaten to kill me, I would hold my head before them ready to be chopped off. Why five, even one person would be able to cut my throat. But I would even then continue to pray till my last breath. If your hearts are purified to this extent, you will neither beat anyone nor get angry with him or her."⁵⁶ Gandhi resumed the prayer when the majority gave him the promise and scrupulously kept it.

"The essence of the Shastras and the Vedas is that God is and He is one without a second. This is the essence of the Quran and the Bible as well. Let no one say that there are three Gods in the Bible. There too God is one."⁵⁷ "Just as God is one though His names are different, Religion also is one in spite of its different names; because all the religions have been derived from God."⁵⁸

"It is because I am a Sanatani Hindu," Gandhi said, "that I claim to be a Christian, a Buddhist and a Muslim. There are some Muslim friends who question my right to recite verses from the Quran. They seem to think that I am misleading people by reciting the Kalma. These friends do not know that religion transcends the bounds of language and script. I see no reason why I am not entitled to recite the Kalma and to consider the Prophet as a messenger of God. I have reverence for the prophets and saints of all religions. I shall pray to God to give me the strength not only to refrain from being angry with those who revile me but to be prepared to meet death at their hands. I believe that, if I am able to adhere to this faith, I shall serve not only Hinduism but Islam also."⁵⁹ "I hanker after Ramanama, and will recite it under a thousand variations. But if somebody tries to coerce me to take a particular name, I will not take even one."⁶⁰

Later Gandhi explained this converse proposition at some length: "Those who out of their own free will read the Gita are welcome to do so, just as I read the Quran and derive spiritual joy from it. If, however, someone orders me to read the Quran under pain of death, I will defy the order and refuse to read the Quran, notwithstanding any jewels of thought with which it may be filled."⁶¹

RELIGION AND POLITICS

Fundamental Unity of Life

"If I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics today encircles us like the coils of a snake from which one cannot get out no matter how one tries. I wish to wrestle with the snake," said Gandhiji, "I am trying to introduce religion into politics."⁶² To Gandhi even the struggle of Indians in South Africa was "a struggle for religious liberty". "By religion I do not mean formal religion, or customary religion," he explained, addressing a meeting of Indians, "but that religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker."⁶³

Years later, Gandhi said to an audience in South India: "The whole of my life is saturated with the religious spirit. I could not live for a single second without religion. Many of my political friends despair of me, because they say that even my politics are derived from my religion. And they are right. My politics, and all other activities of mine, are derived from my religion. I go further and say that every activity of a man of religion must be derived from his religion, because religion means being bound to God, that is to say, God rules your every breath. If you recognize that truth, naturally God regulates every activity of yours." An Englishman wrote of him: "When I first saw Mahatma Gandhi at the Round Table Conference in 1931 I asked how far he was saint and how far astute politician. I later realized that the question was unanswerable: the two aspects were inextricably blended in a singularly complex character. In India saints can be politicians as they could in Medieval Europe."⁶⁴

Gandhi firmly believed in the "fundamental unity of life", to quote his own words. He wrote to Mr. Horace Alexander in 1926: "In my own humble opinion, we needlessly divide life into watertight compartments, religious and other; whereas if a man has true religion in him, it must show itself in the smallest details of life. To me sanitation in a community like ours is based upon common spiritual effort. The slightest irregularity in sanitary, social, and political life is a sign of spiritual poverty."⁶⁵

While some critics, in Indian National Congress and outside, took Gandhiji to task for introducing religion into the Congress politics which they wished to be confined to real politics (as the Germans put it), some others rated him, a man of religion, for having strayed into politics and consequently degraded himself.

To them Gandhiji explained, "There has been no really religious movement in the world, without its social, economic and political consequences."⁶⁶

Gandhiji's life and thought had been shaped under the impact of special circumstances which could not but influence his outlook and determine his line of action. His public life began in South Africa with events which challenged his spirit of manhood, his fellow-feeling for his countrymen, and his sense of justice, as also his religious susceptibilities. If politics are unclean, it is partly because religious men – i.e. God-fearing, truthful, selfless men – have generally kept away from politics; and it is this very consideration that demands of them that they should participate in political affairs and purify these from inside. It was the aim of Gandhiji's political guru, Gopal Krishna Gokhale. As far back as in 1909 Gokhale said, "I can tell you that a purer, a nobler and a more exalted spirit has never moved on this earth...He is a man who may be well described as a man among men, a hero among heroes, a patriot among patriots, and we may well say that in him Indian humanity at the present time has reached its high water mark."⁶⁷

"What did this religious spirit of his lead to, in action? world and its opinion nothing," observed Henry Polak, one of his earliest co-workers in South Africa. "He does not know how to distinguish Hindu from Muslim, Christian from infidel. To him all alike are brothers, fragments of the Divine, fellow-spirits struggling for expression. All he has, he gives. With him self-surrender and absolute sacrifice are demands of his very nature. His deep spirituality influences all round so that no man dares to commit evil in his presence."⁶⁸

George Slocombe, an English journalist, wrote of him years later, "I have never met any man more utterly honest, more transparently sincere, less given to egotism, self-conscious of pride, opportunism, and ambition which are found in greater or lesser degree in all the other great political figures of the world."⁶⁹

Thus no arguments from any quarters could possibly move Gandhiji to eschew politics. To his mind it was a God-given mission to work for the liberation of subject India and for the propagation of non-violence in the world through India.

Results of Chasm between Religion and Politics

"Religion," in the opinion of Radhakrishnan, "has weakened

man's social conscience and moral sensitivity by separating the things of God from those of Caesar."⁷⁰ As a result, the State has been declared to be above all moral obligations. Believing as he did in the supremacy of the moral law Gandhi declared, "loyalty to the country" to be "always subordinate to loyalty to God".⁷¹

Explaining to his own attitude to politics Gandhi wrote: "I have no secret methods. I know no diplomacy save that of truth. I have no weapon but non-violence.

Implication of Gandhian religion in politics

The following are some of the main implications, according to Gandhiji, of the introduction of religion into politics: (i) Cling to truth at all costs; (ii) 'Do or die,' but never 'do or kill,' invite suffering on yourselves, but never impose it on the opponent; (iii) Give the opponent due notice in advance of your intention to adopt a certain course of action against him; (iv) Criticise the opponent's thoughts and policies but not the opponent himself; under no circumstances revile him; (v) Don't take unfair advantage of his difficulties; (vi) Hanker after a chance to make peace with him at the earliest moment possible, so that you can again co-operate with him on honourable terms; (vii) Try to appeal to and awaken the better part of his nature, and never wish his intransigence to be prolonged so that you may win the glory of martyrdom at his hands and he may be condemned in the public eye; rather pray of God constantly to grant him the capacity to see the Right; (viii) Own up your errors and evil deeds – big and small; (ix) Don't assume an air of self-righteousness; (x) Adopt none but the cleanest methods in elections, and don't scramble for the loaves and fishes of office; (xi) Walk in the fear of God and be afraid of no man; (xii) Have the unshakable faith that, in the end, the Right alone will triumph and never the Wrong; (xiii) In the midst of an encircling gloom, pray to the Kindly Light to lead you on; (xiv) Let "one step be enough" for you; don't long to see into the distant future; (xv) Let you and your country have the moral courage to stand for the Right against the whole world, if necessary; (xvi) Let your effort be mainly directed to the increase of your own internal cleanliness and strength.

MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Swadeshi and Swarajya

God-realisation is the ultimate end of life. God can be comprehended in every object. Thus, the attainment of God means self-realisation or swarajya. In a social context this means economic, political and social self-dependence. It was on the basis of this social philosophy that Gandhi initiated the swadeshi campaign. "Swadeshi is the spirit of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote."⁷³ The use of swadeshi introduces self-dependence in the individual and society and also generates love for one's country. Although Gandhi was an internationalist, he was, at the same time, a patriot to his country. He had said, "I want cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible...But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any one of them."⁷⁴

Sarvodaya

Public service is a means to attainment of God, because God is infused in every one. In the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi swadeshi, swarajya and sarvodaya are steps in the attainment of God. Swarajya comes from swadeshi and sarvodaya from swarajya. The ideal of sarvodaya is the ideal of Ramarajya. Sarvodaya means the all round development of every individual. Its aim is the establishment of a society in which every individual, religion, language and literature is to get an unhindered opportunity.

Synthesis of ethics and religion

In this way, Gandhi has synthesized religion and ethics, as he opines that ethics does not preclude religion. A seed in the form of ethics does not give out a sapling until it is watered by water in the form of religion. "As soon as we leave the moral basis we cease to be religious."⁷⁵

Importance and nature of morality

Ethics directs one to discuss truth and falsity and to act without attachment in order to achieve good. It is the science of ideals. It formulates laws both for the society and the individual. It is universal. "Another feature of the moral law is that it is eternal and immutable."⁷⁶ "The highest morality is universal."⁷⁷

In Gandhiji's opinion, how is justice to be done in every situation and how this policy is to be pursued – only the government or state which learns this science can be happy, everything else being inefficient effort. "No individual and no nation can ever violate the moral law with impunity."⁷⁸

Synthesis of Ethics and Politics

And in this way, Mahatma Gandhi synthesized ethics and politics too. Both politics and economics should be grounded in morality. The principal of might is right belongs to antiquity and has not protruded into the present. Non-violence and benevolence are the principal moral laws. "The highest moral law is, as we have seen, that we should unremittingly work for the good of mankind."⁷⁹

Signs of moral laws

The following are the signs of moral laws, according to Gandhi :

- (1) Moral laws are static. (2) Moral laws are not relative to individual or circumstance and are universally comprehensible.
- (3) Moral laws are divine. (4) The result, too, of moral laws is ultimately good. (5) The history of moral laws means the history of the evolutionary deliberation of everlasting, comprehensive and immutable moral laws. As civilization progresses so does the understanding of these laws. (6) The conscience is a divine spark. It is, thus, also the preceptor of moral laws.

Judgment of Good and Bad

Mechanical or intuitive activities are not the object of moral judgement. Like rationalist and purposivist ethicists Gandhi too regards only voluntary actions as the objects of moral judgement. "No action which is not voluntary can be called moral."⁸⁰ These also include activities originating in habit. According to Gandhiji, while contemplating upon morality it is to be attended to that the work is good and done with a good intention. Its result is not in our control, the only one who rewards is God.

Relation between means and ends

At this point the question of means and ends, as a relation, crops up. Generally, Gandhi believes that the means does not become good merely upon the pretence that the end is good.

"Thus end cannot justify the means."⁸¹ But Gandhi has also conceded exceptions to this rule. For example, it was Gandhi himself who originated and implemented the campaign against the notorious salt law. The exception has two aspects, the first where both the means and the end are related to the same individual and the second comes into action when all the superior means have failed. Under such circumstances the use of even bad means may be right. But it is essential that the aim be good under every circumstance.

Criticism of the Ethics of Gandhi

Lack of Originality: Mahatma Gandhi was a religious person whose ethics is grounded in his religious faith. Although not systematic, his ethics voices the spirit of the age. But notwithstanding this redeeming feature from the scholarly viewpoint his ethics or moral thoughts are unorganised and unbalanced. Thus he has been subjected to severe criticism. His thoughts lack any originality. According to B.G. Ray, "Gandhiji starts from Hindu religion, and the metaphysical solution of eternal problems from a Hindu angle of vision form the basis of his philosophy. He has not sought to answer or solve the problem from an independent perspective of experience or reason."⁸² It is not too incorrect to say that Gandhiji did not present any novel moral laws but he cannot be said to be completely without originality. He gave to the old moral laws a completely new form. Gandhiji was the first one to introduce non-violence into the political field and he also made successful use of it. He declared punishment immoral. Gandhiji was the precursor of non-violent revolution.

Extremism: According to Miller, "Gandhiji belongs to the type of sanyasis who repress the flesh consciously, reject all the colour and warmth of life, denounce everything which is not necessary for mere livelihood, hasten the dissolution of the body, so that the spirit imprisoned in it may more quickly be united with the divine."⁸³ Gandhiji is called an extremist, an allegation of undeniable veracity, but it should not be forgotten that he made the utmost effort to make his vows practicable and proved their practicability by following them himself. Excessive emphasis upon repression of senses has led to his ethics becoming permeated with stringency. Probably his assumption regarding celibacy may strike one as untalented and even harmful to happy matrimonial life but a balancing stress upon qualities like non-violence, love,

equanimity etc., have prevented his sermons from becoming utterly heartless. Actually, Gandhiji himself was an experimenter and did not recognise any means as final. He had hoped that there would be new experiments in the application of non-violence and looked at attentively, this hope does not impress one as a false hope.

Doubts about non-violence: Many critics express grave doubts regarding the probabilities of experimentation in non-violence but in order to comprehend Gandhiji's thought it will be essential to set aside the general pragmatic idea and approach the hub of the problem whence the utility of non-violence, for purposes of all kinds of healthy and permanent improvements, will become transparent. There can, of course, be some practical doubts about the possibility of truteeship. Progress is imminent in the attempts of making practical Vinobaji's campaign of Gandhism. Only the future can tell the extent of its practicability. Gandhiji endeavoured to discover the fundamental solution of all problems. Another major reason why his solution of existing problems and his sketches of man's future seem impractical is that human society has not achieved that level and man also lacks the necessary moral strength to successfully use those means. But the only conclusion which can be drawn from this is that society will have to acquire moral strength to proceed upon his path. Non-violence is a means in moral behaviour. The means contradicting it are violence and use of brutal strength. In order to conclude which of these two means is superior and to the extent to and reason for which it is so, it is necessary to precede it by analysing right and wrong. From the ethical viewpoint, right is that which is good and conversely, bad is wrong. Now, the result of any moral action can consist of two aspects – individual and social, upon the object. If any activity favours the perpetrator but harms the object, or if the result of an action benefits the individual and harms society, or it is favourable immediately but detrimental in the long run, then the activity cannot be said to be good because in order to be so, the result of an activity must be good for the individual and society, at present and in future. Here, this question arises only when the reason and the result differ. In the preceding example the result implies the reason.

Judging violence from this criterion, we realise that it can benefit either the individual or the society, never for the two together – a wealthy person exploits the poor and lives in luxury but he causes misery to innumerable more who subsist in misery

and poverty. In a hierarchical society, there is of course general progress but in the absence of a state of independent thought the person's personality remains dwarfed. Besides only the more immediate results of violence can be good. Over a long period it benefits neither the individual nor society. The tendencies of a violent person become degenerate and his character devolves. People fear him but also hate him unostentatiously. Then he is always conscious of misgivings about his opponent's seeking after revenge. Violence gives rise only to further violence.

On the contrary, non-violence results in just the converse way. It may lead to some delay in the maturation of the result but the results are permanent as well as good. It is possible, too, that the one who pursues non-violence may even have to sacrifice his life and bear pain without being rewarded. But even this suffering produces a result calculated to aggrandise the spiritual pleasure of both himself and his opponent. The patience of man is dependent upon his character. A non-violent person is conscious of intrinsic happiness although he may be undergoing extrinsic pain infliction. Even though the opponent does ostensibly resist any such overtures, he internally becomes addicted to this and finally submits himself.

The next question to be considered is whether the use of force is admissible under any circumstances or not? The answer is that in some exceptions it is both necessary and possible. Violence or resorting to force is objected to only when it is used either indiscriminately or for the interests of this or that class or individual. If a particular individual class refuses to abandon, by any means, his incorrect and deplorable path and does immense harm to others then use of force also becomes necessary. At this stage it can be objected as to how is it possible to make use of one person or class as a means to the benefit of another class or individual? Its solution is that the person conducting himself in an objectionable manner does the greatest extent of damage to himself. Gita goes to the extent of saying that although apparently alive, he is in reality dead. In this way, if it becomes irrefutably clear that use of force is in the interests of the offending person or class and all others concerned and also that peaceful means are not going to yield any desirable result then the use of force is both unavoidable and moral. Yudhisthira's lying and Sri Krishna's urging Arjuna to war claim the sanction of identical argument. Pandavas had made unsuccessful and fruitless use of

all peaceful means. The misconduct on the part of the Kauravas had assumed such proportions as to have caused the degeneration of society. Both in the interests of society and the fulfilment of duty it had become indispensable for Arjuna to fight, it being absolutely non-violent to have engaged in war, both from the mental and spiritual viewpoints, as it was qualified by lack of yearning and done with the intention of offering to God. Thus it was also moral.

In the present age, Gandhiji too has licenced resort to use of force in exceptional cases. But it is a necessary condition that all other means should have proved ineffective and use of force should be in positive interests of both, the one using it and the one upon whom it is used. Even Gandhiji himself behaved in a similar way sometimes. The infringement of the salt law was both an evidence of use of force and unconstitutional but it was violating the law of India in the interests of India. There was no other alternative at hand. At the same time it also caused moral improvement of the English people because having reduced India to dependence they were acting in an extremely immoral way. It is also worth-noting that this action was purely for the sake of duty and done without attachment. In the war against the English Gandhiji invariably advanced love and not hatred for them. He declared himself the best friend of the Briton.

In this way, the morality or immorality of resorting to force can be judged only with reference to the entire situation and in some cases it becomes inevitable.

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Cult of Non-Violence

If anyone were asked to give the essence of the social philosophy of M.K. Gandhi in one word, he should call it Non-Violence. Gandhi so much emphasized this principle that this almost sums up his approach in social, political and economic fields. Everywhere his ideal was non-violence, so much so that we can call his ideal cult of non-violence. Explaining this importance of non-violence Gandhi said, "Without Ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsa and Truth are so inter-twined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic

disc. Who can say which is the reverse?"⁸⁴ In the tradition of ancient Indian thinkers Gandhi believed in non-dualism. Reality according to him is one. He, however, laid emphasis on the manifestation of the reality even more than the reality itself. Thus his metaphysics was pluralist. In epistemology he was a relativist having firm faith in Syadwad or relativism. The basic condition for the reconstruction of the society, according to him, is the realisation of God upon earth. He believed in Indian doctrine of rebirth and his social thought aimed at ultimate ideals for which immediate ideals were mere means. He delved into politics in spite of being a religious person simply because man's world, according to him, is a continuous whole. In his own words, "The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole, you cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments"⁸⁵ He was an internationalist like Vivekananda and Tagore and yet he was a great patriot and a nationalist. He said, "He who does not know what patriotism of feeling for one's country is, does not know his true duty or religion."⁸⁶

Gandhian cult of non-violence was based upon his interpretation of human nature. Declaring the importance of non-violence in his social philosophy he said, "Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed."⁸⁷ Hence, "Its (non-violence) spread is my life-mission. I have no interest except for the prosecution of that mission."⁸⁸ Violence, according to him, is the law of brutes while non-violence is the rule of human beings. Here he absolutely differs with Darwinian principles of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. Non-violence, according to him, is not merely an ideal, it is a fact. Replying to his critics who called his philosophy utopian and visionary he said, "I am not a visionary, I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant for the Risis and Saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species, as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute, and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law of the strength of the spirit."⁸⁹

Advancing argument in support of his cult of non-violence Gandhi said, "The fact that there are so many men still alive in the world shows that it is based not on the force of arms but on the force of truth and love. Therefore, the greatest and most

unimpeachable evidence of the success of this force is to be found in the fact that in spite of wars of the world, it lives on."⁹⁰

The Ideals of Satyagraha

Due to his emphasis on truth and the aim of life as truth realisation, Gandhi called his techniques of social reconstruction by the name *Satyagraha* and urged everyone to be a *Satyagrahi*. He prescribed seven vows for a *Satyagrahi* viz. truth, non-violence, *brahmacharya*, control of palate, fearlessness, non-stealing (or non-possession). All these ideals he explained in great details. In each case his insistence was on perfection so much so that his critics have criticised him as an extremist and as ascetic. Most of the vows have been accepted by ancient Indian scriptures. Gandhi knew that every one cannot practise these ideals in the absolute sense and he agreed, "The taking of vow does not mean that we are able to observe it completely from the very beginning, it does mean constant and honest effort in thought, word and deed with a view to fulfil it."⁹¹ A detailed description of these vows will clarify further Gandhian social philosophy.

1. *Truth* : As we have already said, truth is the highest ideal in Gandhian social philosophy. He has, however, taken it in the most comprehensive sense. He said, "There should be truth in thought, truth in speech and truth in action."⁹² Thus truth should be practised in all walks of life – social, economic, political etc.

2. *Non-Violence*: As has been already pointed out, Gandhian social thought was the cult of non-violence. He said, "Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of brutes."⁹³ Explaining his principle of non-violence, Gandhi said elsewhere, "The basic principle of non-violence rests on that what holds good in respect of oneself equally applies to the whole universe."⁹⁴ This is in agreement with the famous Kantian principle that act upon the principle which you want to make a universal law and exceptions are always wrong. Anyone who objected to non-violence as the creed of the coward was reproached by Gandhi. He clarified, "Ahimsa is not the way of the timid and cowardly. It is the way of brave ready to face death. He who perishes with sword in hand is no doubt brave but he who faces death without raising his little finger and without flinching is braver."⁹⁵ Western thinkers, including Prof. Aronold Tonybee, have hailed Gandhian application of non-violence to human society. Gandhi firmly believed that no real democracy can be established by violent means. Unlike Marx

who prescribed violent means for the realisation of classless society, Gandhi insisted on non-violence as the only means for the achievement of the same ideal. Gandhi did not accept any chasm between ends and means. For him no high ends can be achieved without equally high means. He said, "True democracy or the Swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suspension or extermination of the antagonists. That does not make for individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated Ahimsa."⁹⁵

3. *Brahmacharya* : Literally speaking, Brahmacharya means conduct adapted to the search of Brahma i.e. Truth. In the practical sense however, it means primarily chastity and ultimately control of all the senses. Gandhi's emphasis on Brahmacharya has always been a subject of controversy, as it clearly condemns marriage as a necessary evil. He said, "Hence one who would obey the law of ahimsa cannot marry, not to speak of gratification outside the marital bond."⁹⁷ Naturally, this principle cannot be acceptable to contemporary thinkers. Gandhi however, permitted marriage to those who cannot live without it. He said, "Marriage is the most natural and desirable state when one finds oneself, even against his will, living the married life in his daily thought."⁹⁸ India has cherished the ideal of Brahmacharya since ancient times and some of the famous Indian great men and women never married. Some examples are Shankara, Vivekananda and Ramkrishna etc. They have undoubtedly made a significant contribution to our society. Then there was an ideal of Brahmacharya in married state. According to this ideal a person performing sexual intercourse only for getting progeny is a Brahmachari though married. This ideal has always been held in high esteem in India. Gandhi being perfectly in tradition with ancient Indian thought naturally hailed the ideal of Brahmacharya, and his insistence is not without its merit though something can be said about its being an impractical ideal. Medical testimony has been both in favour and against absolute continence and yet no conclusive evidence has been available either in favour or against this ideal. On the other hand, it must be accepted that for a pure religious life, as Gandhi cherished, Brahmacharya is a must.

4. *Control of Palate* : According to Gandhi, "Control of the palate is very closely connected with the observance of Brahmacharya. I have found from experience that the observance

of celibacy becomes comparatively easy.”⁹⁹ Also, “For the seeker who would live in fear of God, and would see him face to face, restraint in diet both as to quantity and quality is as essential as restraint in thought and speech.”¹⁰⁰

5. *Non-Stealing and Non-Possession* : Both these ideals have been cherished in India since ancient times. Non-possession has been considered a virtue by every great religion including Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain and Buddhism. Gandhi has, however, taken both these in absolute sense. Explaining his ideal of non-stealing he said, “I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use and keep it, I thief it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of nature, without exception that nature produces enough for our wants from day to day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world.”¹⁰¹

6. *Bread-Labour* : Bread Labour is the principle that in order to live man must work and this work should be not mental but physical. Gandhi, like Adam Smith, called it productive labour. Explaining his ideal of Bread Labour Gandhi said, “This labour (bread labour) can truly be related to agriculture alone. But at present at any rate, everybody is not in a position to take it. A person can therefore, spin or weave or take up carpentry or smithy, instead of tilling the soil, always regarding agriculture however to be ideal.”¹⁰²

7. *Fearlessness* : Ever since Indian masses waged a war against British domination of this country, Indian leaders preached fearlessness, as it was very necessary to face the atrocities of a foreign rule. Besides, the spiritual leaders have always advocated fearlessness as a necessary condition for spiritual progress. Explaining the ideal of fearlessness Gandhi said, “Fearlessness connotes freedom from all external fear – fear of disease, bodily injury and death, or dispossession of losing ones nearest and dearest, or losing reputation or giving offence, and so on.”¹⁰³

8. *Swadeshi* : While previous moral principles were mainly developed in jail, Gandhi wrote about the idea of Swadeshi from outside the jail. Explaining the meaning of Swadeshi he said, “Swadeshi is that spirit within us which restricts us to use any service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote.”

9. *Swadharma* : Thus (i) In the matter of Religion I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion i.e. the use of my immediate surrounding in religion. If I find my religion defective I should serve it by purging it of its defects. (ii) In the domain of politics I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. (iii) In the field of economics I should use only those things that are produced by immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting.¹⁰⁴ The ideal of *Swadeshi* was derived from the ideal of *Swadharma* as given in *Bhagavadgita*. In spite of being an internationalist Gandhi laid emphasis upon following one's own religion, worshipping one's own God and relishing one's own culture. Explaining his stand in this connection Gandhi said, "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible...But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any one of them."¹⁰⁵

Ideal of Social Reconstruction

In consistency with his principles of truth and non-violence M.K. Gandhi considered decentralization the fundamental principle of social organisation. He was against the communist's overcentralisation by the State. Explaining his attitude towards centralisation in socialism Gandhi said, "I do not share the socialist belief that centralization of the necessities of life will conduce to the common welfare when the centralized industries are planned and owned by the State. The socialist conception of the West was born in an environment reeking with violence. The motive lying behind the Western type and the Eastern is the same - the hideous welfare of the whole society and the abolition of the hideous inequalities resulting in the existence of millions of have-nots and a handful of haves. I believe that this end can be achieved only when non-violence is accepted by the best minds of the world as the basis on which a just social order is to be constructed. I hold that the coming in power of the proletariat through violence is bound to fail in the end. What is gained by violence must be lost before superior violence."¹⁰⁶ Thus Gandhi was clearly against socialist type of revolution. And yet he was a revolutionary no less than Karl Marx. As against the scientific materialism of Karl Marx Gandhian revolutionary technique can be called scientific non-violenceism. Like Karl Marx Gandhi was against capitalism

and considered it an evil which should be immediately abolished. But against Marx he felt that a violent revolution cannot lead to a non-violent social order ultimately. On the other hand, violence leads to violence, whether it may be violence of the capitalist as it is in the capitalist society or violence of the state as it is in the communist society. Gandhi, on the other hand, wanted a permanent elimination of violence against any one. Therefore, he clearly said, "I have always held that social justice, even to the least and the lowliest, is impossible of attainment by force."¹⁰⁷ Also, "Violence on the part of the masses will never remove the disease. Any way upto new experience shows that success of violence has been short-lived. What has been tried hitherto has been a variety of violence and artificial checks dependent mainly upon the will of the violent. At the crucial moment these checks have naturally broken down."¹⁰⁸

As we have already pointed out, Gandhi was a non-violent revolutionary. His techniques of social revolution, therefore, are based on non-violence. Since the practice of non-violence requires love, goodwill, cooperation and fellow feeling, Gandhian techniques include all these virtues.

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Gandhiji was not in agreement with what in Marxian terminology is known as the economic interpretation of history. "I do not believe," said Gandhiji, "that it is Prakriti which originates and governs the thought-processes of Purusha."¹⁰⁹ He believed in the power of the spirit of man to shape its environment to some extent and thus affect the course of history. "I do not consider economic factors to be the source of all the evils in the world," he added, "Nor is it correct to trace the origin of all wars to economic causes. What were the causes of the last War? Insignificant ones. When the present war started, Chamberlain, who had till then bent all his energies on averting a war, changed his opinion overnight, because presumably he was afraid of losing the support of his party if at that stage he sought to keep England out of the war. A better statesman in his place, I believe, would have succeeded in averting the war even then. Was not Helen the cause of the Trojan War? But why go so far? The Rajput wars which belong to modern history, had never their origin in economic causes."¹¹⁰ As S. Radhakrishnan remarks, "History,

however, is not a mere record of class struggles. Wars between nations have been more frequent and violent than domestic struggles, and in the earlier history of mankind tribes and towns fought with one another. The feeling of nationality is stronger than consciousness in the present war. All through history the ruler and the ruled, the rich and the poor, fought side by side against the enemies of the country. We hate foreign workers more than we do our own capitalist employers. There are wars for and against the Reformation which went on in Europe for two centuries... Marxists, with a few exceptions, are fighting today for the capitalist states to which they happen to belong... The conflicts between the Hindus and the Muslims in India, or between the Protestants and Catholics in Ireland, are not manifestations of class struggles. There are class struggles and civil wars, but there are wars of religions and nations also. The latter have been more decisive for human evolution. Again, it is not historically correct to agree that war is the inevitable consequence of capitalism... To represent history as a series of internal struggles, to ignore the forces of race, religion and patriotism, is to oversimplify the complex problem of human evolution."¹¹¹

Interpretation of History

Gandhian interpretation of history interpreted the world as a progress of Divine. The world is a field of the victory of soul force over matter. It is hence that Gandhi hoped that in spite of the last two great wars that we have witnessed in the world, mankind is heading towards an era where violence as a technique will be out of date. To quote Gandhiji, "The present war is the saturation point in violence. It spells to my mind also its doom. Daily I have testimony of the fact that Ahimsa was never before appreciated by mankind as it is today."¹¹² "I am sure", he said, "that out of this orgy of violence the people will learn the lesson of non-violence."¹¹³ Thus Gandhiji has not only eulogised the ideal of non-violence but advanced historical evidence in its support. Marx has also admitted historical evidence but the difference between the two is the difference in the interpretation of the history. Marx believed that individuals changed only if the society changed. According to Gandhi and other Indian thinkers including Sri Aurobindo, Vivekananda and Tagore, society changes due to the efforts of some great individuals. It is not the economic circumstances which create the individual but the individual creates

the economic circumstances. In tradition with Indian social philosophy since Vedas to present day Gandhi has laid maximum stress upon the freedom of the individual. His objection to socialism and the Bolshevik revolution rests upon the objection that it takes away the freedom of the state with greatest fear because although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress.”¹¹⁴

TECHNIQUES OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION

Charkha

The difference between Gandhian technique of social revolution and that of the French or Russian pattern is clear by the symbol of spinning wheel which Gandhi considered to represent the new social order. He invented it since it gives an occasion of physical labour and abolishes the difference between rich and poor. It removes class distinctions and establishes dignity of labour. On the question of the antithetical relationship of the poor and the rich as presented by Karl Marx, Gandhi thought in a different way. Explaining his standpoint on this question, he said, “Exploitation of the poor can be extinguished not by effecting the destruction of a few millionaires, but by removing the ignorance of the poor and teaching them to non-cooperate with their exploiters. That will convert the exploiters also.”¹¹⁵

Self-Purification

Gandhi introduced the spiritual practice of self-purification as one of the methods in political action. This marks the synthesis of spiritualism with politics. Pointing out the importance of self-purification as a method he said, “Because the rulers, if they are bad, are so not necessarily or wholly by reason of birth, but largely because of the environment, that I have hopes of altering thier course. It is perfectly true that rulers cannot alter their course themselves. If they are dominated by their environment, they do not surely deserve to be killed, but should be changed by a change of environment. But the environment are we, the people who make the rulers what they are. They are thus an exaggerated edition of what we are in aggregate. If my argument is sound, any violence done to the rulers should be done to

ourselves. And since I do not want to commit suicide, nor encourage my neighbours to do so, I become non-violent myself and invite my neighbours to do likewise."¹⁶

Soul-Force

Satyagraha, the chief weapon of Gandhian political action has been defined as soul-force by him. He said, "Its (Satyagraha's) equivalent in the vernacular rendered into English, means truth force. I think Tolstoy called it also soul-force or love-force, and so it is."¹⁷ Satyagraha is bound to be non-violent, otherwise it turns into duragraha. Satyagraha is different from passive resistance also, it is active resistance, acting on the path of truth. Distinguishing Satyagraha from passive resistance, Gandhi pointed out, "The Satyagraha differs from passive resistance as the north pole from the south. The latter has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form. Its root meaning is holding on to truth, hence truth-force, I have also called it soul-force or love-force. In the application of satyagraha discovered in the earliest stages the pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent but that must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be truth to the one may appear to be error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on one's self."¹⁸ The most important characteristic of satyagraha is that it can be used most successfully even by one individual and that too in every sphere of life. It is an ideal weapon of war of righteousness. It is latent in every one of us, we have to make it active. It is a universal course. In essence it is the introduction of truth in political life.

Technique of Satyagraha

Explaining the working of satyagraha as a political weapon Gandhi has insisted that it is based on truth and non-violence. Besides, it includes such techniques as involve mutual dialogue such as arbitration, negotiation etc. Besides, it also includes non-violent pressure tactics such as agitation, demonstration, picketing, dharna, economic boycott, non-payment of taxes, emigration, non-cooperation, ostracism, civil disobedience and formation of parallel

government. These steps were taken in the national movement under the guidance of M.K. Gandhi.

Civil Disobedience

The idea of civil disobedience was taken from Thoreau. It is a protest against unjust law. Explaining the validity of civil disobedience as a political instrument, Gandhi said "When you have failed to bring the error home to the lawgiver by way of petition and the like, the only remedies open to you if you do not wish to submit to error, are to compel him to yield to you either by physical force or by suffering in your person, by inviting the penalty for the breach of his laws. Hence satyagraha largely appears to the public as civil disobedience or civil resistance."¹¹⁹ Gandhi distinguished between forced and wilful disobedience of the laws while the latter is involuntary and reluctant disobedience of the laws.

Non-Cooperation

Another instrument in the armoury of Satyagraha is non-cooperation. This technique was widely used by Gandhi in India's political struggle against the British. Explaining non-cooperation as a method of political action Gandhi said, "Non-violent non-cooperation is the method whereby we cultivate the fresh public opinion and get it enforced when there is complete freedom of opinion, that of the majority must prevail."¹²⁰ When non-cooperation alone does not work, Satyagraha becomes assertive and takes recourse to direct action. This may be sometimes embarrassing to his standpoint. He said, "The Satyagraha movement is not started with the intention of embarrassing a government while ordinary political agitation is often started with that object. And yet, if a satyagrahi finds his activities resulting in embarrassing the government, he will not hesitate to face it."¹²¹

No Destruction

In spite of gradual application of more and more pressure and even non-violent direct action, Gandhi was against any violent agitation or destruction of public property. He spoke against the sabotage and destruction of bridges, roads etc., in clear words. He was also against any secret movement or plan of action, since according to him secrecy is violence. In his own words, "Secrecy

aims at building a wall of protection around you. Ahimsa disdains all such protection. It functions in the open and in the face of odds, the heaviest conceivable.¹²² He was also against seizure of power by force. He did not accept forced establishment of *Jatiya Sarkar*.

Fast

Another significant and novel instrument of political action developed by Gandhi is fast. This is a weapon which very much depends upon the soul-force of the person wielding it. Gandhi himself used this weapon in the political field very successfully.

Qualifications of Satyagrahi

Gandhi wanted to organize a whole army of revolutionaries on non-violent ground. He prescribed qualifications for the soldiers of independence movement which he called Satyagrahis.

These qualifications were as follows:

1. Living faith in God.
2. Faith in truth and non-violence as their creed and therefore faith in the inherent goodness of human nature.
3. Chaste life and readiness for sacrifice.
4. Absolute abstinence of intoxicants.
5. Habitual wearing of Khadi.
6. Desire to follow discipline.
7. Following jail rules unless they are against self-respect.

Gandhi himself followed these principles and asked others to follow his example. Though amenable to discussion his method was very much based upon faith and discipline. It was based upon dedication and selfishness. It required a lot of sacrifice on the part of the individual. In order to create a revolution in the country Gandhi demanded 7 lakhs workers so that each village may get at least one revolutionary as base for the programme of revolution. This, however, could never be achieved and therefore, his great vision could never be realised.

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Criticism of Western Socialism

Gandhian political philosophy has been rightly called sarvodaya. Thus it was different from socialism and communism. He has

explained his own position and also pointed out the difference between his own ideology and other popular ideologies. He was well conversant with socialist and communist literature. He had occasion to see how they worked and yet in the tradition of Indian thought and culture he developed an ideology which was entirely indigenous. Pointing out his objection against Russian brand of socialism he said, "From what I know of Bolshevism, it not only does not preclude use of force, but freely sanctions it for the expropriation of property and maintaining the collective ownership of the same. And, if so, I have no hesitation in saying that the Bolshevik regime in its present form, cannot last for long. For, it is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence."¹²³ And yet he agreed with the fundamental principles of socialism such as abolition of private property, elimination of capitalism etc. Socialism, according to him, was prevalent in India right from ancient times and Gandhi borrowed his socialism not from Karl Marx but from the Upanishads. He said, "Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of the capital by capitalists. As I have contended, socialism even communism, is explicit in the first verse of Ishopanishad. What is true is that when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversion, the technique of what is known as scientific socialism was born. I am engaged in solving the same problem that faces scientific socialists."¹²⁴

Neo-Vedanta Socialism

Gandhi belonged to the class of Neo-Vedanta thinkers that India produced in contemporary century, including Aurobindo, Vivekananda, Tagore and others. His socio-political ideology is based upon Vedanta philosophy. The essential of Vedanta philosophy is that there is one universal essence underlying all human beings and therefore a law applicable to one person should be applied to all and *vice versa*. Gandhian socialism was religious and spiritual in the tradition of Vedanta philosophy. Explaining his socialism in details he said, "Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught 'All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of that line and he can, therefore, unmake it.' Gopal literally means shepherded, it also means God. In modern language it means the state *i.e.*, the people. That the land today does not belong to the people is true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who

have not lived upto it. I have no doubt, that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible...And this ideal can be universally realised only if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others. This monopolization by any country, nation or groups of persons would be unjust. The neglect of this simple principle is the cause of distinction that we witness today not only in this unhappy land but in other parts of the world too."¹²⁵

Classless Society without Class War

Gandhi studied communism and liked its essential principles. According to him communism basically means a classless society. He himself wanted to establish a classless society and the end of capitalism but through non-violent means. He was against the class-war theory of Karl Marx. He wanted to create a revolution without recourse to class war. He said, "I can, most decidedly, avoid class war if only the people will follow the non-violent method. By the non-violent method we seek not to destroy the capitalist, we seek to destroy capitalism. We invite the capitalist to regard himself as a trustee for those on whom he depends for making the retention of and the increase of his capital."¹²⁶

The Individual and the State

The most important distinction between the Western brand of socialism and Gandhian socialism is based upon the relation of the individual and the state. While the former seeks to subordinate individual to the state, the latter favoured absolute freedom for the individual and limited the function of the state to bare minimum. This was so because Gandhi considered state as violence personified. He was against violence in any form and therefore he cherished a stateless society. Explaining his estimation of the state he said, "The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but the state is a soul-less machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence."¹²⁷ Thus there is an inverse correlation between the rise of the power of the state and the spiritual progress of society. As more and more power is concentrated in the hands of the state the opportunity for spiritual progress becomes less and less. Therefore, Gandhi was against

any increase in the power of the state. He wanted to keep it subservient to the spiritual individuals. Pointing out his approach in this connection he said, "I look upon an increase in the power of the state with the greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress."¹²⁸ The best rule, according to Gandhi, was self rule. Everything great comes from within. The spiritual progress of a society depends on individuals. Therefore, the individual should be given maximum freedom for evolving without interference.

Decentralisation

As against concentrating power in the hands of the state Gandhi pleaded for decentralization. He wanted to establish political organization of the country on non-violent basis through village communities. He wanted to make every village a unit, free and active for the total good. On the eve of Indian independence in 1946, he said, "Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world."¹²⁹ In the scheme it was not an ascending order but a horizontal circle whose circumference is ever widening, from individual to community, nation, and ultimately including the entire humanity. Explaining his vision of the future India of his dreams Gandhi said, "In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual, always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majority of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it."¹³⁰

Self Government

Thus as opposed to state government Gandhi was more in

favour of self-government and self-revolution. In fact his swaraja meant self-government. This idea is based upon the spiritual thinking that anything genuine and real can come only from within. Morally speaking all good comes from within, nothing can be imposed from outside. Anything imposed from outside is foreign to human nature and cannot be called moral. Explaining his idea of self-government Gandhi said, "Self-government means continuous efforts to be independent of the government control whether it is foreign or whether it is national. Swaraj government will be a sorry affair if people look up for the regulation of every detail of life."¹³¹

Gandhi however knew that in practice it is not possible to abolish the state all together nor is it possible to eliminate all use of force. Therefore, he concedes that the State and the government may exist and yet their powers should be reduced to minimum. He said, "I admit that there are certain things which cannot be done without political power, but there are numerous other things which do not at all depend upon the political power. That is why a thinker like Thoreau said that, that government is best which governs the least. This means that when people come into possession of political power the interference with the freedom of the people is reduced to a minimum. In other words, a nation that runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without much state interference is truly democratic. Where such condition is absent the form of Government is democratic in name."¹³²

Liberty, Equality, Fraternity

The ideal government, according to Gandhi, as according to most of the political thinkers of our age, is democracy. Gandhi, however, wanted to emphasise the principle of non-violence in the actual working of the democracy. He wanted to decentralise the whole political structure. He emphasised equality between human beings and was against too much difference in economic or political field. He wanted to run the government by reducing violence to the minimum. He prescribed social reform of criminals and opposed retributive punishment. He wanted to turn policemen into social reformers. He was against having a large army or military organisation. In nutshell his social organisation gives maximum freedom to the individual. This, however, does not mean that he gives less importance to the society. Pointing out the importance of social obligations in a society Gandhi said, "I

value the individual freedom but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to the present status by learning to adjust his individualism. Individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint for the sake of the well being of the whole society of which one is a member.”¹³³

The Society and the Individual

Gandhian concept of the relation between the society and the individual is based upon the ancient Indian Varna system. In the Varna system different individuals were classified according to their innate tendencies and were given social roles corresponding to them. This, according to Gandhi, created conditions both for the individual development and social welfare. Explaining the law of Varna in Indian social system Gandhi said, “The law of Varna means that every one shall follow, as a matter of dharma-duty, the hereditary calling of his forefathers is so far as it is not inconsistent with fundamental ethics. He will earn his livelihood by following that good of the people.”¹³⁴ Gandhi’s appreciation of Varna system was based on his faith in *Bhagwadgita* which he considered to be his guide in every field of life. He did not think that caste system is a necessary corollary of Varna system. He was also against fixing rigidly the occupations of different Varnas. His was an integral approach to life. This is very much clear from his insistence that every one, howsoever scholarly he may be, must earn his bread by physical labour. Pointing out his ideal in this connection he said, “Brahmin is not only a teacher, he is predominantly that. But a Brahmin who refuses to labour will be voted down as an idiot, because the rishis of the old who lived in forests cut and fetched wood, tended cattle and even fought, but their pursuit in life was predominantly search after truth. Similarly, a Rajput without learning was good for nothing no matter how well he wields the sword. And Vaishya without divine knowledge sufficient for his own growth will be a veritable monster eating into the vitals of society as many modern Vaishyas whether of the East or the West have become. They are, according to the *Gita*, incarnations of sin who live only for themselves.”¹³⁵

Defense of Varna System

In spite of praising Varna system in very clear terms, Gandhi was against casteism and untouchability. As has been already

pointed out, he did not trace caste system to Varna system. In fact he joined in the controversy on this issue and defended Varna system against the onslaught of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Replying him he said, "Varnas and Ashramas are institutions which have nothing to do with castes. The law of Varna teaches us that we have each one of us to earn our bread by following the ancestral calling. It defines not our rights but our duties. It necessarily has reference to callings that are conducive to the welfare of humanity and to no other. It also follows that there is no calling too low and none too high."¹³⁶

Anti-Untouchability

Thus, according to Gandhi, Varna system, far from being the source of untouchability, was against it. Equality demands that we should not distinguish among human beings on the basis of social occupations. Therefore, Gandhi, throughout his life, waged a war against the evil of untouchability. Elimination of untouchability was an important aspect of his programme. As he said, "Removal of untouchability means love for, and service of, the whole world, and thus merges into *ahimsa*."¹³⁷

ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY

Synthesis of Economics and Ethics

Gandhi was not an economist in the academic sense of the term. He was however very much conversant with the economic problems of the country and he thought over them with his characteristic basic approach. He himself said, "I am not an economist, but India may become a self-sustained country, growing all the produce she needs. This may be an utterly ridiculous proposition and perhaps the best proof that it cannot be true is that England is one of the largest importers in the world."¹³⁸ Thus Gandhian economic programme was based upon the ideal of self-sufficiency. Man, for him was the ultimate consideration. Therefore, he never compromised ethical principles with economic progress. The ideal of man, according to him, is spiritual progress first and last and no economic progress can violate this principle. He however, did not sharply distinguish between economics and ethics any more than the distinction between religion and politics. Thus Khaddar economics was based upon ethics.

Indigenous Approach

The basic ideas of M.K. Gandhi, in economics as well as in politics were drawn from ancient Indian philosophy of life. Traditional Indian thinking is against giving an important place to consumption in life. It lays emphasis on minimising the wants rather than maximising them. It is against too many desires and sanctions only the minimum desires. Thus it is against production of such things which are classed among luxuries. Indian philosophy has always preached that man's life is for spiritual evolution and not for physical satisfaction. Born and brought up in the tradition of Indian philosophy and spiritualism, Gandhi, an ardent follower of Gita, developed an economic theory which was in tune with Indian spiritualism. His ideas, besides being based on Indian philosophy of life, were also equally derived from his experience of Indian social life of his time. He was very much perturbed by the abject poverty of his countrymen. He was moved by it and he scratched his brain to the maximum to find out the solution. But he wanted a solution which may lead to spiritual progress and not an opposite retrogression. Thus he wanted economic progress but not at the cost of spiritual values. Therefore, he was against mechanisation though he permitted small machines necessary for every day life. The production of these machines obviously should be in public sector.

Mass Control of Necessities

Therefore, Gandhi pleaded for decentralization of industries and that of all the economic functions including production, consumption and distribution. As early as in 1928 he declared, "According to me the economic constitution of India and, for the matter of that the world should be such that no one under it should suffer from wants of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realised only if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be, they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others. This monopolization by any country, nation or group of persons would be unjust. The neglect of this simple principle is the cause of destitution that we witness today not only in this unhappy land but other parts of the world too."¹³⁹

The Economic Ideology

We may conclude this discussion by reproducing the relevant portion of an article by Gandhiji which gives us an idea of his economic ideology. He said, "The political and economic organization of the state shall be based on principles of social justice and economic freedom. While this organization shall conduce to the satisfaction of the national requirements of every member of society, material satisfaction shall not be its sole objective. It shall aim at healthy living and the moral and intellectual development of the individual. To this end to secure social justice, the state shall endeavour to promote small scale production carried on by individual or cooperative effort for the equal benefit of all concerned. All large scale collective production shall be eventually brought under collective ownership and control, and in this behalf the state shall begin by nationalizing heavy transport, shipping, mining and the heavy industries. The textile industry shall be progressively decentralised."⁴⁰ About state industries Gandhi remarked, "In all state-owned and state-managed enterprises, the workers shall be represented in the management through their elected representatives and shall have an equal share in it with the representatives of the Government."⁴¹

Trusteeship Theory

The most important and yet the most controversial point in the economic philosophy of Gandhi is the theory of trusteeship. He was against capitalism and yet he was not against capitalists. He wanted to use their genius as managers of industries. He was against destruction of anything including the capitalist class. His non-violent means were all pervasive including the economic field. Therefore, he said, "In reality the toiler is the owner of what he produced. If the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power. That is how I do not see the necessity of class conflict. If I thought it inevitable I shall not hesitate to preach it and teach it."⁴²

Explaining the mechanism to bring about trusteeship Gandhi said in answer to a question at the Round Table Conference in England, "Not merely by verbal persuasion, I will concentrate on means. Some have called me the greatest revolutionary of my time. It may be false, but I believe myself to be a revolutionary – a non-violent revolutionary. My means are non-cooperation. No person can amass wealth without the cooperation, willing or

forced, of the people concerned.”¹⁴³ The socialist thinkers within the country and also outside, doubted the possibility of trusteeship. Gandhi, however, wanted to give it a fair trial though in his life time none except Jamna Lal Bajaj came somewhere near his ideal. He was against accumulation of wealth by violence but he was also against mass production or large scale nationalisation. In fact, he was against all mad race after wealth. He was aware of the dangers of state capitalism and therefore prescribed decentralisation of industries. His ideal was equitable distribution if not equal distribution. Labour, according to him, is the master of the means of production and never a slave of it. Capital is the servant of labour and not its master. He, therefore, like Karl Marx advised the labourers to get united, for a non-violent struggle. Like Karl Marx again he aimed at a stateless society, but this stage has to be achieved through non-violent revolution as anything secured through violence, according to Gandhi, is bound to fail in the end.

INDIAN SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY

The above discussion of the philosophy of M.K. Gandhi makes it clear that essentially it was based on spiritual interpretation of human nature and human society. The integral approach to life, characteristic of Indian philosophy, is explicit in every principle propounded by Gandhi. Like other Indian thinkers he was a religious man and had firm faith in God. The ultimate aim of the life according to him was liberation or Moksha as most of the Indian philosophers have called it. All the aspects of life are inter-related. His solutions of the problems of social, economic and political fields were basically the same, those based upon the principles of harmony, synthesis, cooperation, liberty, equality and fraternity, spiritual evolution and ultimately leading to God realisation and the establishment of kingdom of God on earth. In the understanding of the philosophy of M.K. Gandhi it is crucial to remember his religious and spiritual background and his link with traditional Indian thought. He was well versed with western thinking of his time and he referred to the ideas of western thinkers here and there but everywhere his approach was Indian and Hindu, his vision based upon the vision of *Bhagwadgita*.

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8

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Among the contemporary Indian philosophers Rabindranath Tagore occupies a very important place. He synthesised a poetic vision of the future of human society, with a missionary zeal of a social reformer and the keen insight in human affairs of a novelist. He was at the same time a great political force and a universally acknowledged scholar, a well known educationist and an ardent social reformer. As regards his vision of social progress he was very much above his time and that is the reason why his ideas about social progress and social reconstruction are relevant even today.

R.N. Tagore believed that by living in forests seekers of knowledge in India could cultivate a state of mind which was free from the desire of extending its domination by creating boundary walls around his acquisitions. The aim of the Indian sage was "not to acquire but to realize, to enlarge his consciousness by growing with and growing into his surroundings. He felt that truth is all-comprehensive, that there is no such thing as absolute isolation in existence, and the only way of attaining truth is through the interpenetration of our being into all objects. To realize this great harmony between man's spirit and the spirit of the world has been the endeavour of the forest dwelling sages of ancient India."¹ The extension of the vision could take place by concentration and meditation and so by meditation and service could be cultivated consciousness of a spiritual meaning in everything.

METAPHYSICS

Tagore believed that the most laudable attempt of man is to assimilate his personality into that of the super-human. The

infinite in man is an expression of the infinite in the superman. Real religion seeks unity of the two. The finite is limited whereas the infinite is unlimited. The infinite possesses both negative and positive aspects. "The negative idea of the infinite is merely an indefinite enlargement of the limits of things, in fact, a perpetual postponement of infinitude."² While "the positive aspect of infinite is in *advaitam*, in the absolute unity, in which comprehension of the multitude is not as in an outer receptacle but as in an inner perfection that permeates and exceeds its contents."³

The Absolute, the complete can be attained by total efforts. Sometimes through knowledge attempt is being made to bring about the union of the part with the whole. But this would never be possible because knowledge according to Tagore is only a part of god and how could this part merge into the whole. Man has the potentiality of meeting the Infinite but he can not often do so because he is living in the state of ignorance.

In Tagore's philosophy of religion concepts of soul and spirit are found. "The realization of our soul has its moral and its control of desire; the spiritual side represents sympathy and love...The cultivation of merely moral side of our nature leads us to the dark region of narrowness and hardness of heart, to the intolerant arrogance of goodness; and the cultivation of merely spiritual side of nature leads to a still darkened region of revelry in intemperance of imagination." Thus for Tagore "the soul's birth in the spiritual world is not the severance of relationship with what we call nature, but freedom of relationship, perfectness of realization." Tagore thought that establishment of this relationship could be done by intimate contact with nature and for this he admired the Indian sages and seers. He asserts that "the Indian mind never has any hesitation in acknowledging its kinship with nature, its unbroken relation with all."⁴

Neo-Vedanta

Rabindranath Tagore imbibed Vedantic orientation from his early childhood. The family had a mixed environment. He was very much impressed by his father, 'The Maharashi'. Upanishadas too appealed to him most. He was a lover of nature from the very beginning. The seclusion of the child made a positive contribution towards drawing him more and more to nature. It made him think for long about the secrets of nature. The young mind would think not only over the creation but the creator also.

Upanishad's impact on Tagore's mind is evident from his lines: "To me the verses of the Upanishads and the teachings of Buddha have ever been things of the spirit, and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth; and I have used them, both in my own life and in my preachings as being instinct with individual meaning for me, as for others, and awaiting for their confirmation, my own special testimony, which must have its value because of its individuality."⁵

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Tagore thought and worked in Indian tradition. His entire thought is based on personal observation or 'Anubhava'. He was a visionary who reached conclusions by deducting generalities from observation. This method of his holds good for his religion also. He admits "my religion is a poet's religion; all that I feel about it is from vision and not from knowledge. I frankly say that I cannot satisfactorily answer your question about evil, or what happens after death. And yet I am sure that there have been some moments when my soul has touched the Infinite and has become intensely conscious of it through the illuminations of joy."⁶

For Tagore religion is an effort of man to attain the ultimate truth. He says, "It consists in the endeavour of man to cultivate and express those qualities which are in him. If those qualities were absolutely natural in individual, religion could have no purpose."⁷

For Tagore religion is a means to higher values in man. "Man in his religion cultivates the vision of a being who exceeds him in truth and with whom also he has his kinship. These religions differ in details and often in their moral significance, but they have a common tendency. In them men seek their own supreme value in some personality, anthropomorphic in character. The mind which is abnormally scientific, stops at this; but it should know that religion is not essentially cosmic or even abstract; it finds itself, when it touches the Brahman in man; otherwise it has no justification to exist."⁸

Tagore has assigned a definite constructive purpose to religion. He opines "Religion has its function in reconciling the contradiction by subordinating the brute nature to what we consider as the truth of man... Religion concentrates itself on humanity, which

illuminates our reason, inspires our wisdom, stimulates our love, claims our intelligent service.”⁹

Opposed to Ritualism

In order to translate their preachings into action religious leaders develop some organization. Tagore feared that with the coming up of the organization the natural growth of the religion is hampered. He points out, “Where religion has to make way for religious organization it is like the river being dominated by its sandbed; the current stagnates and its higher aspects become desert-like.”¹⁰

The ritualistic aspect of religion presupposes some deity or set of deities, places of worship, rituals and dogmas. This aspect is as essential as the ideational one. Tagore is opposed to this aspect of religion. He maintained that unintelligible rituals and dogmas are at best only cohesive principles that hold together individuals of a particular community marking them off from individuals of other groups. Rabindranath has no sympathy for these. Man tends to separate one individual from another, or one group from another, tends in effect to deny the humanity of man and is as such anti-religious, unless, of course, religion is something totally divorced from the essential spirit in man, *viz.*, reason, morality and love. This, in a nutshell, is Rabindranath’s reaction against rituals and dogmas.”¹¹

Opposed to Orthodoxy

Due to his humanistic orientation towards religion Tagore was opposed to fanaticism. He opines that “orthodoxy is not necessarily narrow-mindedness. What matters seriously is whether these orthodox people are fanatics or not. Fanaticism is definitely anti-religious, and when Rabindranath condemns unintelligible rituals and dogmas, this is only because the line between fanaticism and orthodoxy is very thin.”¹²

Opposed to Idolatry

As a result of this rational outlook towards religion, Rabindranath opposed idolatry. “Rabindranath is against idolatry, not so much because idolators circumscribe God but primarily because they hypostatise as a person or entity what is really a living function; and he would equally speak against those who, even knowing that he is a functional unity, yet personify

him. If God is a person, He is ever dynamic, ever dissolving Himself, as the indwelling spirit of all individuals."¹³

Votary of Golden Mean

Tagore always believed in the theory of golden mean. He was a synthesiser and as such "he had never been an orthodox puritan and had no sympathy for the iconoclasts of his time, and yet he never shook hands with the orthodox."¹⁴

Unity of Mankind

The main end of religion for Rabindranath was the unity of mankind. He believed that this unity could come through spirituality alone. Though Tagore had great faith in the spirituality of the East yet he did not contribute to the opinion that it was the monopoly of the East. He was convinced that the material advancement of the West could not occur in the absence of spirituality.

Tagore's God lives at humble places in the company of humble people.

"Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest and lost...

My heart can never find its way where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, and the lowliest and the lost."¹⁵

The God is there "Where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is breaking the stones, He is with them in sun and shower, and His garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like Him come down on the dusty soil."¹⁶

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Philosophy is in a certain sense based upon interpretation of history, since history is not merely an anthology of the deeds of some individuals but a record of the pace of humanity in its various stages and directions, it gives a peep into the future of man. Tagore was a keen student of history. This is explicit from his article "Itihas Katha". Written in 1905 this article is an important document about Tagore's interpretation of history. He laid emphasis upon the importance of knowledge of history.

He said, "If you think closely, we shall see that the greatest disparity in knowledge between the educated and uneducated in our country lies in the knowledge of history...It is a most lamentable ignorance for man not to know what man has done or can do in this world."¹⁷

History acquaints people with their country. It is the record of the glory and weaknesses of the race. Therefore the historians owe a great responsibility towards the people. Indian history so far, however, has been rather royal biography. Therefore, Tagore pleaded for re-writing of Indian history. Explaining his idea of history he said, "History is a manifestation of the dialectical process, of the play of opposing forces and the attempt to establish a balance between them. Indian history presents a clear picture of this historical dialectics and the attempt to strike a balance, which should be duly stressed by historians."¹⁸

He also criticised teaching of history in India which was mainly based upon cramming of instances. He, on the other hand, emphasised critical examination and authenticity. In the words of H.B. Mukherjee, "Tagore attached considerable importance to the collection of original and authentic historical material by the students from direct sources through 'region study' and independent researches as also excursions and tours to places of historical interest in order to have a vivid and realistic impression of the historical significance of the places visited and the objects seen at first hand."¹⁹

Interpretation of Indian History

In the words of Tagore, "Man's history is the history of his journey to the unknown in the quest of the realization of his immortal self – of his soul. Through the rise and fall of empires, through the building up of gigantic piles of wealth and the ruthless scattering of them upon the dust; through the creation of vast bodies of symbols that give shape to his drama and aspirations, and the casting of them away like the playthings of an outworn infancy, through the forging of his magic keys with which to unlock the mysteries of creation, and through his throwing away of this labour of ages to go back to his worship and work afresh in some new form! yes: through it all man is marching from epoch towards the fullest realization of his soul, – the soul which is greater than the things man accumulates, the deeds he accomplishes, the themes he builds, the soul whose onward course is never checked by death or dissolution."²⁰

Indian history is a record of the stages, progress, the ideals of Indian people. It records the social life and spiritual attainments of India. According to Tagore Indian history however needs to be re-written. It has been a process of constant adjustment between different sections of people. Explaining the goal of history Tagore pointed out, "Neither the colourless vagueness of cosmopolitanism, nor the fierce self-idolatry of national worship, is the goal of history. And India has been trying to accomplish her task through social regulation of differences on the one hand, and the spiritual recognition of unity on the other. She has made grave errors in setting up the boundary walls too rigidly between races, in perpetuating in her classifications the results of inferiority, often she has crippled her children's minds and narrowed their lives in order to fit them into her social forms, but for centuries new experiments have been made and adjustments carried out."¹¹

In his analysis of Indian history Tagore found the key-note in the principle of unity in diversity. This has been supported by other historians as well. Even the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* mainly portray attempts at synthesis and adjustment between good and evil, different classes, various races and ideologies. In his pamphlet entitled, *A Vision of India's History*, Tagore showed a deep insight into the processes of Indian history when he said, "The history of India has been the history of the struggle between the constructive spirit of the machine, which seeks the decadence of order and confirmity in social organisation, and the creative spirit of man, which seeks freedom and love for its self-expression. We have to watch and see that the latter is still living in India; and also whether the former offers its service and hospitality to life, through which its system can be vitalized."¹²

Thus Tagore maintained that the history of India is a history of social evolution. In his interpretation of the two great epics — the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, Tagore has shown them as records of two great social revolutions. *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* both depict the conflict between Aryans and the Dravidians and finally a synthesis between the two. In his interpretation and explanation of both these epics Tagore has laid special emphasis on their spiritual nature. He has taken special pains to explain the mythology found in these epics. He has accepted Rama and Krishna as Avataras, who came on the earth for some special purposes. According to Tagore both the epics depict cultural assimilation between Aryans and Dravidians. In his opinion Indian culture is a product of cross-fertilization between these two great

cultures. To quote his words, "Dravidians might not be introspective or metaphysical, but they were artists, and they could sing, design and construct. The transcendental thought of the Aryans by its marriage with the emotional and creative art of the Dravidians gave birth to an offspring which was neither fully Aryan, nor Dravidian, but Hindu."²³ Besides these two cultures, India has been the scene of the synthesis of several other cultures of the people who invaded the country from the West. Tagore was against dividing Indian history into periods based upon the rule of particular people of the country such as Moghal period and Pathan period etc. This, according to him, is an unwarranted division of a continued history of the country. About the Moghal and Pathan periods he points out that they were invaders and not part of the nation. Therefore their rule should not be particularly emphasized. Similarly, British rule in India was a great misfortune and therefore it should not be emphasized in the teaching of history. As compared to earlier invaders the Britishers had some novelty which was realised by Tagore though he did not mince words in condemning the rule of British people over India. Thus, according to Tagore, Indian history was yet to be written in its true spirit. In his own words, "The real history of India was yet to be written by Indian writers, who were in a better position to undertake the task from a more accurate perspective than foreign writers nursed in different historical traditions. Though the Indian historians are likely to interpret Indian history from a viewpoint entirely opposed to foreign historians, and to be equally blame-worthy for partisanship and lack of dispassionate historical objectivity, the two opposite extremes would help a third party to approach the task with considerable impartiality and objectivity."²⁴

Ideal of Progress

Interpretation of history very much depends upon the ideal of progress. Progress is interpreted in terms of movement towards a goal. Different thinkers have laid emphasis upon different goals of life, thereby presenting different concepts of progress. Tagore's ideal of progress is religion-oriented. The ideal of man, according to him, is perfection. This requires spiritual progress. For the attainment of this aim man has to conquer the weaknesses of his flesh. The real progress, however, is not only the progress of the individual, it is the progress of the Nation and ultimately of the Humanity.

According to Radhakrishnan, "To him progress and reform consist in conserving the ancient ideas and building upon them. Preserving the soul of the Indian style, we may adopt whatever is good and noble in the West."²⁵ Thus Tagore synthesized the Eastern and Western concepts of progress. Progress, according to him, lies in harmony. Harmony has been the central principle of Indian culture. Disharmony, on the other hand, is detrimental to progress. In Indian society the agricultural pattern has to be synthesised with the industrial order. Science has to be harmonised with the spirituality. The knowledge of the West should be synthesised with the wisdom of the East. It is accepted that India is more spiritual while West is more material. A solution for their ideal progress requires a synthesis of both. Criticising the materialistic ideal of progress Tagore said, "What is called progress is the progress in mechanical contrivances; it is in fact an indefinite extension of our physical limbs and organs, which, owing to the enormous material advantage that it brings to us, has tempted the modern man away from his inner realm of spiritual values."²⁶

Thus Tagore wanted a synthesis of spiritual and material values for real progress of mankind. This is very explicit in his ideas concerning Indian society and its problems and remedies which we will now discuss in sequence.

PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIETY

Social philosophy is philosophy of society. Society is a web of social relationships. It includes social relations between different sections of society. These social relations involve processes of social control and social change. The social relationships are regularised through social institutions. In his philosophy of society Tagore analysed the structure of Hindu society of his time, pointed out its evils, and suggested remedies.

Evils of Hindu Society

As an enlightened and intellectual leader of his time, Tagore was very much conscious of the evils of the society around him. As a poet he was most sensitive to the atrocities of the strong over the weak. He revolted against the prevalent evil customs of Hindu society. Since he was basically a devout Hindu, his analysis is mainly concerned with Hindu society. His ideal everywhere

has been humanistic and synthetic. The bases of Hindu society are philosophical. Varnashram system is the backbone of Hindu social structure. Pointing out to this system, Tagore said, "The Indian mind has ever been oriented towards that transcendentalism which does not hold religion to be ultimate but rather to be a means to a farther end. This end consists in the perfect liberation of the individual in the universal spirit across the furthest limits of humanity itself."²⁷

Thus the sages of Hindus established a uniform social order throughout the country. In this social order people were categorised in different varnas and life was understood as a sequence through four stages known as Ashramas. Tagore was a great admirer of this system though he condemned the narrow use of the term *dwija* for Brahmins. According to him this term should be used for all the people and therefore no one should be barred from any Hindu Sanskar. Praising the social system and its uniformity in India Tagore said, "In India, the whole mind of the people spread itself over the entire country even to the remotest villages, in thought and deed and joy. This explains why the successive onslaughts of various foreign powers in different periods of her history have not been fatal to her. Not a village was without its institution for elementary education, located in the 'Chandimandap' of the local magnate. For every four or five villages there was at least one learned Pundit freely giving his store of learning to those who sought it. On such men rested the responsibility of maintaining the purity of the traditional social ideal. The enjoyment of wealth in those days was not narrowly personal. From each main current of wealth branched out a number of irrigation canals on every side. Similarly, intellectual treasures of the wise were freely open to all. Teachers, far from demanding fees, did not look to the students for their maintenance. Thus did the multifarious life force permeate each village. That was why there was then no scarcity of food or water, and the spirit of man had not to starve."²⁸ Pointing out the evils of Hindu society Tagore particularly condemned the following:

1. *Super Naturalism* : In Indian social thought the duties have been determined by some supernatural power or God. Therefore, there is no option to doing one's own duties allotted by the Caste in which he is born. Indian society is duty oriented, this has suppressed rights of a section of people. Condemning this irrational situation of basing everything on supernatural

powers and the scriptures which record the dictates of these supernatural powers Tagore said, "Reason and judgement have no place in our social customs either; it is simply not the form to ask why we do, or how to do, this or that. In the entire universe India alone is exempt from the law of cause and effect, her courses are latent in the scriptures. It is the scriptures that must determine whether sea voyages are good or bad, and the Pundits must decide whether the entry of a person in your room would contaminate the water in your Hookah. Why it should be transgression to drink water touched by a low caste hand but not milk, date, juice or treacle; why one should lose caste if one eats rice prepared by a non-Hindu but not if it is wine – you ask these questions and you will be forced into silence by threats of social ostracism."²⁹

2. *Casteism* : Almost all the contemporary Indian social philosophers have maintained that casteism is the main evil of the present Hindu society. All these have condemned this evil and Tagore was no exception. Pointing out to this evil of Hindu society in his characteristic poetic expression, Tagore said, "In her caste regulations India recognized difference but not the mutuality which is the law of life. She accepted nature where it produces diversity, but ignored it where it used that diversity, for its world-games of infinite permutations and combinations. She treated life in all truth where it is manifold, but insulted it where it is moving. Therefore, life departed from her social system and in its place she is worshipping with all ceremony the magnificent cage of countless compartments that she has manufactured."³⁰

Thus Tagore, "was a severe critic of caste system."³¹ "He believed and repeatedly declared that the caste system and its attendant practice of untouchability were among the darkest blots of Indian society."³²

3. *Untouchability* : Vivekananda, Gandhi, Tagore and other contemporary Indian social philosophers have also condemned untouchability along with casteism practised in Hindu society. While Gandhi was the architect of the anti-untouchability reform movement in India, Tagore as a writer and poet analysed the malady in all its details. His dance drama *Chandalika* and his novel *Gora* analysed in details the feelings of the untouchables, their disabilities and suggested remedy. He not only condemned the practice of untouchability but made solid efforts for its removal.

He organised a scouting team named 'Brati Balak' for fighting untouchability. He organised Hindu Mela as a social get-together of all the sections of Hindu society. The purpose of this get-together was the development of a general community consciousness among Hindus. In his novel *Gora* Tagore has given a vivid description of the social evils found in rural India. To quote his own words, "Gora saw the image of his country's weakness, naked and unashamed, in the midst of the lethargy of village life where the blows from outside could not work so readily. He could see nowhere any trace of that religion which through service, love, compassion, self-respect for humanity as a whole, gives power and life and happiness to all. The tradition which merely divided men into classes and separated class from class, driving to a distance even love itself, did not want to carry its effect that results of man's intelligent thinking, and only put obstacles at every step in the way of man's coming and going."³³

Paresh Babu in *Gora* explains the wrath of untouchability in these words, "There is no harm in a cat sitting by and eating right besides you. But if certain men so much as enter the room, the food has to be thrown away. How can one not condemn the caste system which has resulted in this contempt and insult of man by man? If that is not unrighteous, I do not know what is, those who can despise their fellow-men so terribly can never rise to greatness; for them in turn, shall be reserved the contempt of others."³⁴ The heartfelt sorrow of this old man is depicted in these words: "What I actually see before me is the intolerable aversion of man for man in our country and how it is dividing and subdividing our people."³⁵

The different characters in this novel have condemned the practice of untouchability in strongest words. They maintain that unless the society can give them social justice it has no claims upon the individuals. The relation of the individual and society, according to Tagore, is mutual and interdependent. A true Indian, according to him, should not be against any religion because Hinduism does not preach hatred. In his vision of Indian society Tagore was not limited to Hinduism alone. He wanted the society in which the distinctions, of caste, untouchability and religions should go. In the words of Gora, Tagore said, "Today give me mantram of that deity who belongs to all, Hindu, Mussulman, Christian and Bramo alike – the doors of whose temple are never closed to any person of any caste, whatever, He who is not merely the God of the Hindus but who is the God of India herself."³⁶

4. *Joint family* : In rural India the family has been joint for centuries. The joint family system had its own advantages, but under the present changed circumstances these advantages have almost dwindled. The disadvantages of the joint family system, on the other hand, are very conspicuous. Therefore most of the contemporary Indian social thinkers are in favour of abolition of joint family. This is so also because of the fact that joint family is connected with caste.

Tagore pointed out that joint family system is particularly injurious for marital adjustment of the newly wedded couples. Neglect of children and lack of privacy for the couple are the two banes of joint family which have led to its present disintegration. In one of his letters to his wife Tagore wrote, "I have come to the conclusion that at least for a short period immediately after marriage a girl should keep away from her parents and give herself unrestricted opportunity for being with her husband. The presence of her parents in the midst of this union interferes with it because the habits and tastes of her husband's family are not the same as those of her own, and there are bound to be differences of opinion. With her parents near at hand a girl cannot forget her old ways and identify herself wholly with her husband."³⁷

5. *Lower status of women* : As a poet and a novelist Tagore was naturally sensitive towards the difficulties of women in our society. In his different literary works he has vividly described the evils of child marriage, the Purdah system and the custom of Sati practised in Indian society. He has deplored the Hindu concept of superiority of men over women and called it a relic of the barbaric age. He has praised the women for their qualities of chastity, modesty, devotion, power of self-sacrifice, grace and sweetness, stability, rhythm, reciprocity and other human qualities. He maintained that in the present cultural crisis of Hindu society women can play an important role for which they should be given equality of status. Without such equality the family institution cannot work because according to Tagore balance of power is the central core of family. In his own words, "Balance of power, however, between man and woman was in a measure established when home wielded a strong enough attraction to make men accept its obligation."³⁸ While emphasising equality for women Tagore warned her that freedom is not frivolity. He was against overlapping roles of the male and the female. He emphasised different roles for males and females which are complementary to each other. He pointed out that without the regeneration of

women, our society cannot progress. He said, "Women can bring her fresh mind and all her power of sympathy to this new task of building up a spiritual civilization, if she will be conscious of her responsibilities. Of course, she can be frivolous or very narrow in her outlook, and then, she will miss her great mission. And just because woman has been insulted, has been living in a sort of obscurity behind man, I think she will have her compensation in the civilization which is waiting to come."³⁹

From the above discussion it is clear that Tagore wanted to give equal status to women in society. He regarded family as an institution based upon balance of power, a balance between the wife and husband, the parents and the children. In this balance both the parts of a relationship were complementary. Thus, Tagore visualized a society based on perfect harmony, cooperation and absolute absence of exploitation. In his novels Tagore has often commented upon the mercilessness of society. He has condemned evil customs concerning marriage and family such as bride price, dowry and domination of male over female etc. He was a vehement critic of Purdah system.

Society and Individual

The most important concept in social philosophy is the relation between the individual and society. Here, as everywhere, Tagore has maintained that harmony is the basis of all relationships. It is the aim of all attempts at social reconstruction. Tagore believed in the functional and organic concept of society. In his own words, "Society as such has no ulterior purpose. It is an end in itself. It is a spontaneous self-expression of man as a social being. It is a natural regulation of human relationships, so that men can develop ideals of life in cooperation with one another."⁴⁰ Like Sri Aurobindo, Tagore believed that society is the expression of the divine. Both individuals and society are equally expressions of the divine force.

Tagore has analysed human nature with the insight of a poet and novelist. About human nature he said, "Man has two sides – the individual and the social. One is unreal without the other. When man in a sudden impulse rushes headlong in the direction and losing balance causes all manner of trouble, the counsellor wanting to cut short the crisis advises chopping of one side altogether. When individualism turns into downright selfishness and runs foul of society, the lopping off of "self" at

one stroke from self-interest is the proposed remedy for all trouble. Trouble may thereby be lessened but it is not improbable that society will cease to move altogether."⁴¹ Thus man is by nature individual as well as social and the real problem is to create a harmony between these two sides of men. Pointing out the importance of the concept of society in the social philosophy of Tagore, Bhattacharjee has written, "Samaj or society is the key concept in his social philosophy. He visualized it as a living organism, the basic institution necessary to ensure the material, cultural, moral and spiritual fulfilment of the individuals composing it. The goal of the samaj is to advance the 'civilization' of the people."⁴² This goal can be achieved by giving perfect spiritual freedom to the individuals and creating in them a strong sense of social trust and responsibility.

The State and the Individual

While on the one hand Tagore was an admirer of the Russian system of communist society, on the other hand as a poet he was against the dominance of the state. He wanted the state to function as a subordinate institution for the maintenance of law and order. He was not an anarchist but he believed in individual freedom. Though he was against domination of the state he did not think that the state functions are only negative. Like his contemporary philosophers he believed in a welfare state. Pointing out the relation between his social and political philosophy, Sachin Sen has rightly said, "Tagore's social and political philosophy are integrally linked with each other. That is why he could never think of political freedom and growth in isolation from social freedom and integral development. Nay, he went much further and also included in the content of freedom, economic independence, and emancipation of the individual in every respect."⁴³ Freedom, according to Tagore, has a comprehensive meaning. It is not only social but also economic, political and finally spiritual freedom. It is hence that Tagore was equally against social evils, poverty and political exploitation. Explaining the real meaning of the term freedom in his social philosophy Tagore points out, "Real freedom is of the mind and spirit; it can never come to us from outside. He only has freedom who ideally loves freedom himself and is glad to extend it to others. He who cares to have slaves must chain himself to them; he who builds walls to create exclusion for others builds walls across his own freedom; he who distrusts freedom in others loses his moral right to it. Sooner

or later he is lured into the meshes of physical and moral servility."⁴⁴ This emphasis on human freedom is the basis of Tagore's Religion of Man, Humanism, Cosmopolitanism and his faith in democracy. He was opposed to Totalitarianism. He had firm faith in democratic values. Like his contemporary philosophers he opposed British Rule in India. He was a great patriot who loved his country with all his heart. He was proud of his country and his people. He has praised Indian people in his novels. He took very active part in struggle for independence against the British. Whenever there was an occasion he raised his voice against the Government. In his political views he was not an extremist but in the political programme of Indian National Congress he was not with the moderates. Pointing out his position in this matter K. Kripalani has written, "Tagore has no sympathy with the moderates of the Congress Party whose political faith is symbolized by the mid victorian catchwords of Rationalism and Enlightenment, progress and liberty, and whose method is the peaceful constitutional agitation through the press and the platform...He thinks that the moderates have developed mendicancy in politics into a fine art. The followers of this "Begging Method" do not know what paths lead to success, and even if they know, have not the courage to pursue them. The extremists are not the bomb-throwers and the train wreckers but the advocates of independence of action."⁴⁵

Having no sympathy with the moderates, Tagore was very critical of Gandhi's idea of non-cooperation and spinning. He did not accept Charkha as a solution of Indian poverty. He ridiculed the programme of boycott of foreign goods. Though he admitted Gandhi as a religious man he did not accept him as an economist. Clarifying his views about boycott of foreign goods Tagore said, "We have been ordered to burn foreign cloth. I, for one, am unable to obey. First, because I believe it to be my duty to fight the habit of blind obedience, secondly, I feel that the cloth to be burnt is not mine. It belongs to people who are sorely in need of it. He who seems to be doing an act of sacrifice through this incendiarism has other sources of supply; but those who are really hit cannot stir out of doors because of their nakedness."⁴⁶ Tagore's opposition had its scientific basis. Like Gandhi he was against machine and mechanization but he also maintained that we cannot absolutely do away with science and technology. He wanted to go deeper into the economic and political evils. He wanted a real Swaraj which is thus described in his own words :

"Swaraj for the whole of India would begin in the village where the people have formed themselves into a united community set on improving its health and education, its economic life and amusements no less. That Swaraj would then advance by its own power, its propulsion inherent in the organic process of its own living growth, and not in the mechanical solution of the spinning wheel."⁴⁷ To achieve this political goal Tagore wanted to give a positive programme to the country. He wanted to teach them lesson of self-discipline. He planned for Rural leadership, abolition of Zamindari, cooperative movement and consolidation of land. He laid down criteria for the assessment of political achievement of Indian National Congress. He laid down the following points as guidelines for National reconstruction:

- (i) Unless we can move with the times, we are lost.
- (ii) The watch-word of the day is organization.
- (iii) Our national consciousness does not yet fully and uniformly pervade our organization.
- (iv) The many points of artificial differences that separate the sophisticated classes from the masses are so many bars to the proper growth and spread of (National) consciousness.
- (v) Internecine conflict among the cultured classes cannot but retard the consummation."⁴⁸

PHILOSOPHY OF ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION

As a religious man Tagore believed in the Christ's saying that blessed are the poor since they will be rewarded. Like all religious persons including Gandhi and Vivekananda, Tagore believed in service of men as the best means of service of God. He rightly called his religion 'Religion of Man'. Of the God of masses he said, "He is there when the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is breaking the stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and His garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down to the dusty soil."⁴⁹

In his different writings Tagore has given a vivid description of poverty in Indian villages. He was in direct and personal touch with the rural people. He observed their conditions, understood their problems and pondered for remedies. His solutions every-

where emphasized the principles of harmony and synthesis. This principle is visible in his discussion of the relationship of the landlord and the tenant, the village and city, the rich and poor. He believed in the principle of the Golden mean. While on the one hand he appreciated maintenance of Indian culture and rural society he was also in favour of the progress of science and technology, industrialization and urbanization. Pointing out the equal importance of the village and the city in a society, Tagore said, "In the natural state, that is, when the community does not incline too much to one side, the village and the town have harmonious interactions. From the one flow food and health and fellow feeling. From the other return gift of wealth, knowledge and energy. A civilisation which comprises mainly village life cannot advance very far. There the individual is unimportant, the community predominant. On the other hand, where the town predominates, the individual is all powerful, the community negligible."⁵⁰

Since ancient time Indian society had been a rural and agricultural society. Gradually, there was an impact of the system of large scale organization of production which led to the growth of cities and centres. The industrial economic system laid stress upon profit and cut throat competition which resulted in class conflicts. Due to the ruthlessness of the British rule in India, society lost its self-propulsion. In ancient time economic achievement was subservient to the attainment of social virtue but now economic achievement has become the supreme God. Tagore criticized this economic approach to life. The poet in him revolted against the artificial and mechanical urban life. His play *Red Orleanders* was a protest against the machine age. He was very much conscious of the evils of mechanization though he considered it necessary for the progress of the country. Thus he was not against industrialization and urbanization but he pleaded for decentralization of power. He wrote, "Be it science or its outcome the machine, the power they give should not be monopolized by a few."⁵¹

Like Gandhi, Tagore was very much pained by the widening of the gulf between the rich and the poor in India. Like Gandhi again, he suggested the principle of social and economic trusteeship as the solution of the problem. Pointing out to the causes of the weakening of the principle of trusteeship in Indian society, Tagore said, "Once Indian society was mainly rural. In this intimate environment there was harmony between personal and communal

property. Public opinion was so strong that the rich man was ashamed of enjoying his wealth alone. He felt honoured when society accepted favours from him; in short, in this relationship there was nothing of what is called charity in English. The wealthy took his place by the side of the destitute. To maintain his status in society he had to contribute very liberally in many indirect ways. Pure water, medical aid and education, temples, entertainments and village roads were provided out of private means flowing into several channels and not out of royal revenue. Here individual and communal will could cooperate. It was spiritually creative because its basis was voluntary and not a political agency, in other words, it implied not merely the external success of law but personal improvement as well. The latter element, indeed, is the lasting living refuge of human welfare."⁵²

Besides decentralization of economic power and the operation of the principle of trusteeship of the rich over the poor, Tagore emphasized the importance of consolidation of holdings for the success of mechanized cultivation. He laid emphasis upon cooperative movement in agriculture. In his opinion the evils of industrialization can be checked by cooperation. He said, "If the farmers in a village or, better still in a community unit, combined and engaged in a joint cultivation of their land on a cooperative basis, they could all profit by the use of these modern machines, which would reduce cost and help produce large yields."⁵³

Besides encouragement to cottage industries Tagore made special efforts to encourage agriculture in his villages. He sent one of his sons and a nephew to USA to learn mechanized cultivation. He reorganized his zamindari so that maximum social and economic reconstruction may be possible. He arranged for banks and agricultural implements. He introduced controlled mechanized cultivation. He tried to arrive at a synthesis between agricultural and industrial economies. He made all efforts to improve farming on cooperative basis. Summing up Tagore's efforts at rural reconstruction in his area, it has been written in his centenary volume, "The pargana of Kaligram, with its headquarters at Potisar, consisted of 150000 bighas (roughly 70 square miles). There were 0 to 7 thousand people living in 125 villages. The development of such an area was quite a large undertaking even when compared with the national Extension Blocks of the present day. For efficient management, he divided the Estate into three zones, each with a self-governing organization but federated to a central administrative body called the Hitaishi

sabha. Each village had an elected headman. Then such headmen elected a pradhan. These pradhans again elected five headmen from amongst themselves to represent the total population of the Estate and they were called the panch pradhan. The Hitaishi sabha met once a year to scrutinize and pass the year's accounts, draw up a budget for the next year, assign to the vibhagas the grants they would each receive from the sadharan (general) fund, forward any complaints with regard to the management of the Estate, to the zamindar and to discuss the general policy to be followed in improving the condition of the village."⁵⁴

Soon after the Hitaishi sabha was organized and met for the first time at Potisar, the members proposed that a compulsory levy of three pice for every rupee paid as rent by them should be imposed for carrying out the work undertaken by the sabha. This proposal had the full support of the entire population. Later on the sabha increased the amount of this self-imposed betterment tax to fifteen pice per rupee. The state made a substantial contribution to the fund which had come to be known as the sadharan (general) fund. The money was spent through the vibhag organization in establishing and maintaining schools and dispensaries, constructing roads, filling of stagnant pools, re-excavating tanks, and in general, carrying out public welfare projects.

Thus Tagore's scheme of rural uplift included eradication of casteism and untouchability, modification of joint family system, emancipation of women, cooperative farming, consolidation of holdings, encouragement to self-government through elected leaders, encouragement to dignity of labour and finally a proper relationship of the village with the city. Like other notable thinkers, Tagore realized that the progress of this country very much depends on re-generation of the village society. He not only thought over this problem but also made actual experiments in his villages. Pointing out the value of rural reconstruction in the social philosophy of Tagore, it has been rightly said, "Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore's work on or approach to agrarian reform followed firmly from his social philosophy and his particular analysis of the process of the historical evolution of the Indian society and of the structure and role of village communal life in her ancient civilization."⁵⁵

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Nationalism

As has been already pointed out, Tagore believed in democratic political institutions. He not only accepted democracy as the only form of Government which can provide freedom to the individual but also practised it as the philosophy of his life in dealing with people all around him. He was a great patriot and a nationalist but at the same time he was an internationalist and humanist. His political philosophy may be described as cosmopolitan universal humanism. The highest aim of all political activity, according to Tagore, should be to create national unity. He desired that our political programme should be dominated by the constructive ideas of spiritual freedom. Tagore's political philosophy is the climax of his social philosophy. In his philosophy the higher includes and integrates the lower though also transcends it. Thus he was a nationalist and a patriot though his nationalism and patriotism were subordinated to internationalism.

Expressing his love for his motherland Tagore said, "The basis and the foundation of the great India lies in the recovery of her soul and the regaining of a fresh confidence in her own national life. If India recovers her strength of soul and grip of spirituality, which is the secret spring of life, then no power on earth can stand against her newly acquired energy of spirit."⁵⁶ And yet he did not accept nationalism as the highest sentiment in man. Defining the nation he said, "A nation in the sense of the political and economic union of people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose."⁵⁷

In fact Tagore's conception of nationalism was based upon his observation of this phenomena in Europe where different nations continued to conflict with each other and each tried to gain ascendancy over the other by hook or crook. It was with this type of nationalism in mind that Tagore exclaimed, "When this organization of politics and commerce, whose other name is the nation, becomes all powerful at the cost of harmony of the higher social life, then it is an evil day for humanity."⁵⁸

Tagore however, was conscious of the fact that in the progress of collective consciousness of man nationalism was a necessary step from individualism but wanted to limit it so that it may not lead to conflict with other nations. Hence he maintained "Ideally

speaking, the nationalism which stands for the expression of the collective self-interest of a people, need not be ashamed of itself if it maintains its true limitations."⁵⁹ Without this self-limitation nationalism becomes a profession. It is a profession of training people for a narrow idea. It is not a creative idea but a destructive one. It creates a monotonous organization of society.

Criticising this type of nationalism as dangerous to man Tagore said, "But what we see in practice is, that every nation which has prepared has done so through its career of aggressive selfishness either in commercial adventures or in foreign possessions or in both...as for a nation, selfishness is a necessity and therefore a virtue. It is the emphasis laid in Europe upon the idea of the Nation's constant increase of power, which is becoming the greatest danger to man, both in its direct activity and its power of infection."⁶⁰ Therefore Tagore concluded that increases in national sentiment is a danger to human civilization itself. He was led to this judgement also because of the examples of extreme nationalism presented by Germany, Italy, England and other nations in Europe, who tried to expand their empire everywhere to achieve their own selfish interests. Thus Tagore rightly asserted that, "With the unchecked growth of nationalism the moral foundation of man's civilization is unconsciously undergoing a change. The ideal of the social man is unselfishness, but the ideal of the nation, like that of the professional man, is selfishness. This is why selfishness in the individual is condemned, while in the nation it is extolled, which leads to hopeless moral blindness confusing the religion of the people with the religion of the nation."⁶¹

Cosmopolitanism

Similar ideas have been expressed by Sri Aurobindo in his book *The Ideal of Human Unity*. Sri Aurobindo however, has been more clear about the nature of true nationalism as spiritual subjective nationalism which he distinguished from false nationalism or narrow objective nationalism. What the man has to avoid is the latter form of nationalism while the former form of nationalism leads him ultimately to humanism. Here Sri Aurobindo's views about nationalism are more balanced than that of Tagore. D.P. Mukherjee has rightly pointed out, "Tagore was critical of the sentiment of nationalism, but he did not fully realize (1) that nationalism in Europe was that particular phase

of socio-development in which the vested interests had come home to roost, (2) that nationalism in India was an uprising of those indigenous interests which had been openly backed by imperialism of their divine right to exploit, and (3) that these two were interconnected even as contradictions.⁶² However it can be said in favour of Tagore's view that the growth of nationalism so far has only confirmed his doubts and suspicions. In Germany nationalism has expressed the worst form of racism. In fact racism in our time is a product of nationalism, hence to do justice to Tagore's view we may conclude with D.P. Mukherjee, "Rabindra Nath's foresight about the future of a power civilization was prophetic, but it was more intuitive than analytic, more scientific than just poetic. He has not only made a prophetic assertion but frequently has proved what he has said by concrete facts. We find today that nation and nationalism without certain limitations can do no good to people. Those limitations may be taken as theoretically possible, but practically once when these cults are given ground they go unchecked."⁶³

Therefore in place of nationalism Tagore pleaded for internationalism. He was convinced that cooperation and friendship between nations is absolutely necessary for the progress of mankind. Here his views have been supported by almost all the notable thinkers of the world. It has been generally accepted that no nation can solve its problems unless the problems of humanity have been solved. In the progress of humanity, according to Tagore, each nation will use its special gifts for the good of mankind and spirituality will be the contribution of India as she has been the meeting place of different nations since ancient times. This is possible in spite of our material properties. Pointing out to internationalism as the need of our time, Tagore maintained that for its own safety each nation should now work for universal welfare. It was to meet this end that Tagore established Vishwa Bharti. The international aim of this reputed institution was explicit from the three-fold programme including consolidation of Indian culture, consolidation of Asian culture, and finally cultivation of international contract in the fields of learning and culture.

Thus Tagore was one of the greatest humanists of our time. In the words of professor Humayun Kabir "Rabindra Nath Tagore was one of the greatest humanists the world has known. The key-note of his life was resistance to tyranny in all forms. He struggled against economic exploitation, political subjugation, social

inertia and injustice and religious intolerance and insensitive-ness."⁶⁴ Tagore's humanism is expressed through his literature. He gave man a central place in his social philosophy, in his religion, politics and his educational and economic thoughts. In his struggle against British rule in India he maintained a deep love and great respect for British people and English literature. Summing up the message of humanism given by Tagore it has been rightly said, "Humanity is the very epitome of the wide and varied universe. To know it properly is to realize the highest manifestation of Brahma, since in all its world-wide aspects humanity is permeated with the spirit of God. This universal greatness of humanity has truly found its triumphant poetic expression in our age in the literature of Rabindra Nath."⁶⁵

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9

SARVAPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN

The present author is convinced that integral approach is the only sound philosophy for man in his individual as well as collective life. It is the proper perspective for understanding individual and social problems. It is characteristic of man, due to his peculiar nature and his status in the cosmic scheme of things. Such is the philosophy of S. Radhakrishnan.

Interdisciplinary Approach in Social Sciences

It is now being more and more realised in the field of social science that the complex problems such as the nature of man cannot be studied by any one science or by different sciences separately. Thus interdisciplinary approach is being utilised to understand such problems. Man's behaviour cannot be understood purely by biological, psychological or social perspective. It requires a Bio-Psycho-Sociological approach. Human personality can be understood only by total perspective.¹ Human life can be understood by a global view. This interdisciplinary approach is the integral method in science with the characteristic limitations of scientific method. To quote Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "We should weave different parts of experience in a total pattern. We should keep our general ideas connected so that different experiences may be explained."²

Integral Approach in Philosophy

Philosophical activity is synoptic. Speculative behaviour involves man's search for harmony with the world around him and with cosmos. The philosophical system is the outcome of the philosopher's search for an alround understanding of cosmos and his

own place in it. Whatever may be its limitations, system building is natural to man. And the more comprehensive a philosophical vision is the more wise it is for man. Experience is the basis of all philosophy. The more integral the experience, the more integral will be the philosophy based upon it. Philosophy should find place for all types of experiences – sensual, religious, occult, vital, spiritual etc. Integral reality satisfies our whole being. A true philosophy is a philosophy of affirmation. A catholic and synthetic approach is the need of the time. Philosophy should be close to life. It should bridge the gulf between man and man and man and nature. The widest and the most comprehensive seeing is the wisest one. Logic must be based on experience. Methods should change according to the type of enquiry. In science, philosophy, religion, psychology or any other branch of human knowledge the integral theory should find place for all other theories, show their limitations and weld them all in an integral whole. Different branches of human knowledge need not conflict among themselves. Philosophy should present a '*Weltanschauung*' which justifies the truth of each branch of knowledge.³ In the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "Philosophy is an attempt of human beings to know the problems of creation by reflection and intuition."⁴

This integral approach in philosophy is characteristic of the present evolutionary stage of man's speculative activity. Integralism signifies not only a philosophical viewpoint for the academician but a perspective for the layman as well. In fact it can be applied in all the fields of human knowledge. One-sidedness and limitation is characteristic of human ignorance. On the other hand, the more he proceeds towards the ideal of integration, the nearer he is to reality and knowledge. The success of man's life lies in living integrally, in depth as well as on surface, horizontally as well as vertically. The validity of the integral approach is derived from the complex and multisided nature of man, from the wide variety of his needs, from the distinctions of various levels on which he lives and from his status between beast and gods.⁵

This integral approach is characteristic of the thinking of most of the contemporary Indian philosophers. According to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "Philosophy is integral experience."⁶ Intuitive knowledge is the highest knowledge⁷ and intuition is integral experience. Total experience gained by total self is much higher than any other experience gained by any part of man's being.⁸ As Sri Aurobindo puts it, "The work of philosophy is to arrange

the data given by the various means of knowledge, excluding none, and put them into a synthetic relation to one truth, the one supreme and universal reality!"⁹ Similar quotations can be traced in the works of Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, Tagore, Gandhi and Bhagwandas. Radhakrishnan has acclaimed ancient Vedanta philosophy as the basis of his philosophical ideas. He is a neo-vedantic and the vedanta philosophy is characteristically monistic, idealistic and integral. The integral spirit is characteristic of not only the philosophical thinking of S. Radhakrishnan but also of his multisided life involving not only religious and philosophical activity but also intense activity in social, educational and political fields.

METAPHYSICS

Radhakrishnan was an idealist philosopher. He was an advocate of ancient Indian Vedanta philosophy. This is very much clear from his works *The Hindu View of Life*, *Brahmasutra*, *An Idealist View of Life* etc. He defined philosophy as a combination of reflection and intuition.¹⁰ According to him the aim of philosophy is to search that synthesis which may include all the aspects of creation. Philosophy, according to him, "is an attempt of human being to know the problems of creation and the nature of ultimate reality."¹¹ In epistemology Radhakrishnan admitted the value of both reason and faith, logic and experience. He admitted the value of perceptual, conceptual and intuitive knowledge in education. According to him intuitive knowledge is the highest knowledge.¹² It is an integral experience. He admitted mystic experience as a part of intuitive experience.¹³ Total experience is gained by total self and it is much higher than any other experience gained by any part of man's being.¹⁴ Creative insight has an important place in total knowledge. Radhakrishnan however, is nowhere an anti-intellectualist like Bergson or Bradley. He was not a mystic in the final analysis. His philosophy has been rightly interpreted as Integral experience.¹⁵ Integral experience finds place for every other type of experience in it.

The Human Personality

Human personality, according to Radhakrishnan, is not determined by physical environment, economic or otherwise. So far as physical changes are concerned they may be generally

determined by the environment but the human will is free to decide to win or loose. The real human freedom is the freedom of will. This has been granted to man. In the tradition of ancient Indian thinkers Radhakrishnan had admitted the principle of *Karma*. According to this principle our present is determined by our past and the future depends upon the present. In the words of S. Radhakrishnan, "*Karma* or relationship with the past does not mean that man cannot do anything freely but free action is involved in it."¹⁶ The law of *Karma* is not fatalism. According to it, "An individual will gain according to the use of his energy. The world will respond to the individual *Jivatma*'s demand. The nature will reply the insistent call of the man."¹⁷ Thus, like Karl Marx, Radhakrishnan believed that man can change the world. On the basis of his will he can make his future. The principles of Nature are the principles of justice. In Nature and in human world, everywhere one universal divine law functions. Therefore, the law of *Karma* is not an external but an internal determinant of human life.

In the line of evolution, man is distinguished by self consciousness which is not found either in plants or in animals. Therefore, the mental processes cannot be interpreted in terms of physical changes. The physical movements do not explain total behaviour. Modern psychology takes a one-sided view of man while presenting behaviouristic interpretation. Behaviourism has only historical value. Man's behaviour cannot be explained by stimulus-response formula. An organism is not merely a sum total of parts. Its parts are internally related. Consciousness does not come out of matter, it is a new creation. Again, self-consciousness is not a biological phenomena. It should not be explained in physiological or biological terms. With the evolution of self-consciousness Nature evolves to a new level of existence. The self-conscious man is rational. Self-realisation is the aim of life. This self is the Spirit. In the words of S. Radhakrishnan, "Spirit is life, not thing, power not status, real in itself and through itself and cannot be compared to any substance subjective or objective."¹⁸ The spirit expresses as itself, God and the world. Thus human nature is essentially spiritual. Spiritual also means natural because nature is as much an expression of Spirit as the self. Human life is not only natural but also divine since its essential nature is spirit. The world is a gradual evolution towards spirit. In this evolution man is at the apex. This evolution is both emergent as well as continuous. What is not cannot happen,

whatever is, it develops. This metaphysical hypothesis is very important in the philosophy of education. The child will develop only that which is potential in it. What is not implicit cannot be explicit. However, every level of evolution expresses new elements. The characteristics of spirit are seen in creativity, change, system and progress. These are the characteristics of every field of life and so of education. Education aims at complete expression of the inherent spirit in man.

Mysticism

It appears that Radhakrishnan's philosophy is mysticism so far as the concept of spirit is concerned. In his book *An Idealist View of Life*, Radhakrishnan has called spirit total Brahman.¹⁹ Brahman precedes creation. Identifying God and creator Radhakrishnan said, "They are the different forms of seeing the same ultimate reality."²⁰ Thus like Sri Aurobindo Radhakrishnan believes the world to be the expression of God. This metaphysical proposition lays down the spiritual goal of education and certifies its possibility. In fact, Radhakrishnan has synthesised idealism and realism, mysticism and pragmatism in his philosophy. He welcomes all sorts of experience to arrive at some general principles. As he said, "We should weave different parts of experience in a total pattern. We should keep our general ideas connected so that different experiences may be explained."²¹

In spite of being a votary of science Radhakrishnan is not a determinist or environmentalist. This fact is of capital importance in his explanations of human nature. Science proves that every effect has a cause but it does not definitely prove the cause of every effect. As David Hume has rightly pointed out, the principle of causation in the field of science is a mere probability. So far as physical incidents are concerned, they are determined by natural laws but man has been provided freedom of choice in life. He is not free to choose his cards but he is free to play, win or loose as he likes. This freedom of winning or losing is given to man.

Spirit: The Ultimate Reality

Radhakrishnan interprets the world as the play and evolution of spirit. Matter, life, mind are the manifestations of the spirit in the world. Spirit is not a substance but life itself. In the words of Radhakrishnan "It is the basis and background of our being, the universality that cannot be reduced to this or that formula."²²

The self, God and Absolute are all names of the one universal spirit in different aspects. Thus the most characteristic feature of the spirit is its integrality. It leaves nothing out of its ken, it integrates all, it permeates everything. In order to know it we must look to life from all sides, gross as well as refined, higher as well as lower, primitive as well as civilised. It is so since, "Spirit is life not thing, power not status, real in itself and through itself and cannot be compared to any substance subjective or objective."²³

The dominant theme in the metaphysics of Radhakrishnan is the presence of one universal spirit as the inner essence of all being and becoming. Spirit has been acclaimed as the Reality in the ancient Upanishads and the works of all the idealist thinking in the world. Therefore, it is not an original idea of Radhakrishnan. However, he has made original contribution by connecting the idea of spirit with the findings of modern science. The greatest merit of his philosophy is that it is an interpretation of the real world and real life. He does not confine philosophy to realisation of truth like the ancient Indian seers, but applies it to actual problems of his time. Therefore all his ideas revolve around science, intuition and religion. He does not accept dialectical materialism or any materialism for that matter. He is mystic so far as the reply to the ultimate why is concerned. He admits that spirit is the basis and background of all reality, a universal substance which cannot be explained by this or that formula.²⁴ The three elements of metaphysics – the self, the God and the world – are the different expressions of one universal spirit. This universal Spirit has been variously called God and Absolute, Ishvar and Brahman. In man Spirit expresses in a limited field. In God it expresses in a universal form. In Absolute it involves not only the present manifestations but also the immense future possibilities.

Theory of Evolution

Matter, life, mind and self are the steps of gradual evolution of spirit, spirit evolves gradually and in this evolution each higher evolute is not merely resultant but also emergent. Therefore, the higher cannot be totally explained in terms of the lower. As compared to the lower, the higher is a fuller expression of spirit. Thus, though various evolutes may be arranged in a sequence, there is no necessary continuity among them. Hence Radhakrishnan maintains both continuity and novelty in evolution.

Whatever is not cannot be but whatever is, must evolve. Spirit is the Absolute. In creative universal expression it is God. God is the expression of Absolute Spirit in the world. World is the creation of God. Absolute and God, formless and formed, abstract and concrete may be only theoretically distinguished, in reality these are identical. Thus Radhakrishnan has synthesised mysticism, idealism and intuitionism. This is the metaphysical basis of his integral philosophy.

Intuitive Method in Philosophy

While pointing out the limitations of empirical, rational and critical methods in philosophy and accepting their limited value, Radhakrishnan has utilised intuitive method because spiritual intuition is the only method to devolve into the recesses of spirit. He distinguishes spiritual intuition from mental, vital and physical or instinctive intuition. According to him, "The deepest facts of life are known only through intuitive apprehension."²⁵ He however, admitted the role of reason in life and thought. As a higher instrument of knowledge, intuition does not negate, but fulfils the lower instruments such as reason, instinct etc. Spiritual intuition also permits an integral view of life and its deeper realities. It is the integral method of integral philosophy.

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Synthetic Approach to Religion

Radhakrishnan exhibits an integral viewpoint in his synthetic approach to religion. He has pointed out contribution of each great religion to humanity and emphasised their fundamental unity.

Indian culture is fundamentally religious. Radhakrishnan has been one of the most eloquent spokesman of Indian culture in our time. He developed his philosophy of religion in half a dozen books including: *Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, *The Hindu View of Life*, *East and West in Religion*, *The Religion We Need*, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought* and *Religion and Society*. He lamented that real religious spirit is dwindling in our times. The biggest crisis, the world faces today is the detriment of true religious spirit. Radhakrishnan repeatedly points

out to this danger in his various works. In comparison to East, the West insists more upon science. Aping the West the East has forgotten its religion. Intellect and reason have substituted intuition. This has shaken the spiritual culture. Man's life has become aimless. He is prejudiced by racial, national and regional prejudices. Indifference to internal spirit has resulted into disorder, disintegration, conflict and imbalance in individual, social and national life. According to Dr. S Radhakrishnan, the only remedy to this imminent danger is to revive ancient religion to its high pedestal.²⁶

Radhakrishnan assures that religion can give us the highest bliss, it can maintain our intimate contact with creativity. It can bestow upon us a divine will, serenity and internal peace which cannot be swayed by any shock however powerful it may be.

In religion alone man may express his true spirit. The world today needs the evolution of human spirit as has been emphasised by all the religions of the world. Indians have today forgotten their duties as they have forgotten their religion. Burdened by scientific rationalism and conservative religion man is today searching his aims by wrong means. Radhakrishnan calls them 'substitutes of religion,'²⁷ which cannot be as effective as real religion itself. Theosophy, Anthroposophy, Christian science and New thought have substituted spiritual religion. Those who do not believe these express the tendencies of scepticism, agnosticism, atheism, pragmatism, socialism, modernism and secularism. Criticising all these trends Radhakrishnan maintains that their substitutes cannot fulfil the aims realised through real religion. On the other hand, they increase doubt, disorder, disbelief and lead to moral, spiritual and social aimlessness and disorder. Therefore, Radhakrishnan raised his voice against these so called modern trends. Unfortunately, this aspect of Radhakrishnan's philosophy is generally neglected by contemporary teachers of philosophy in Indian Universities.

Spiritual Revolutionary

Radhakrishnan is a spiritual revolutionary though he generally confined his revolutionary activities to theoretical writings, educational reforms and speeches as Chairman of University Grants Commission, India's Ambassador to Western countries and finally as President of the Indian Union. As a spiritual revolutionary, Radhakrishnan wanted to transform contemporary philosophy and religion and re-establish it on a religious edifice. He has

strong faith in man's future destiny. He believes that man is still in the process of evolution. His full evolution is still a far cry. His greatest need of the hour is inner awakening. The world needs today a religion of spirit which may provide aims to human life, integrate its prose and poetry and provide contentment to our total being, our intellect, our desires. This however, is not possible through the revival of ancient religion. It needs a synthetic attitude to religion since "The aim of religion is spiritual and not merely a change in metaphysical ideas."²⁸

Among the world religions, Radhakrishnan is a staunch votary of Hinduism. Hinduism is not a dogma but a style of life. It is not a cult but a universal fraternity of those who believe in the norms of truth and search it with faith. *Bhagwad Gita*, the great book of Hindus preaches world religion. To quote the words of Radhakrishnan, "Bhagwad Gita has everything rational, moral and spiritual, and answer to every question of human progress and its perfection."²⁹ It does not represent any particular sect of Hinduism but the entire Hinduism itself.³⁰ It is the message of Hinduism to the world. Hinduism is not bound to any institution. It is a universal religion. It has the potency to become a world religion. Its past history tells us that it has the dynamism to change according to any future changes.³¹ By his emphasis upon the Universal elements of religion as such, including tolerance, fraternity, spirituality, synthesis, catholicity etc., his religion is not cut off from philosophy, science and art. According to Radhakrishnan, philosophy and religion, science and art, all these are concerned with different aspects of the Ultimate Reality. All these are connected with fundamental problems and basic ideas.³²

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Harmony of Nationalism and Internationalism

Radhakrishnan had been one of the leaders of the rise of nationalism in India. He relentlessly criticised and opposed foreign rule in India. He everywhere pleaded for *Swadeshi* and *Swadharma*. He gave a crushing reply to Western attacks on Indian philosophy. Comparing ancient Indian Socialism with its modern western counterpart, he pointed out the virtues of Indian system. And yet he strongly supported internationalism, and the ideal of world brotherhood. It was so because of his integral perspective of social

and political philosophy in which the higher does not contradict the lower but fulfils it. To quote Radhakrishnan, "The wider patriotism does not supersede but embraces the narrower patriotism."³³

Meeting of Extremes

Thus the philosophy of Radhakrishnan can be characterised by a meeting of extremes. This is because he had a wide and deep knowledge of Western science, art, literature and culture and a first hand contact with the West. It is hence that he could compare Eastern thought with Western and reach at an integral viewpoint. Thus one finds a meeting of idealism and realism, ancient Indian ideals and modern Western principles, nationalism and internationalism, individualism and socialism in his writings. He drew his inspiration from ancient scriptures, Upanishads and Gita. He reinterpreted the ancient Vedanta philosophy in modern age. He synthesised spiritual truths with scientific discoveries. He pleaded for a meeting of Eastern and Western culture and religion. He advocated a world government and a world state, so that humanity may march in its onward progress as one solid community. He reconciled modern activities with ancient ideals of renunciation. Thus in metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, ethics, religion, education, social and political science, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has maintained an integral approach, the only proper perspective for the future speculative activity of man. The author of the present very brief note only touches the broad outlines of this integral approach in the philosophy of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. The task of presenting it in all its intricacies and details is the burden of future researchers.

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CONCLUSION AND CRITICAL EVALUATION

The three important problems of metaphysics are the nature of totality, the world and the individual. The concept of individual in contemporary Indian philosophy is based on ancient Indian concept of Atman. All individuals are essentially Atmans. Atman is Brahman, the essence of individuality and collectivity is therefore the same. But neither individuality alone nor collectivity in solation of the individual is the reality. Reality is individuality in and through the collectivity and collectivity lives in and through individuality.

LIBERTY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Therefore contemporary Indian philosophers stood for individual liberty. They, however, explained it in spiritual freedom in distinction from freedom of other type. Liberty, according to them, did not mean indetermination but self-determination. It was liberty to follow *Swadharma*, to grow according to ones own nature. Therefore they condemned any attempt from the society of the state to dictate the individual from the society or the state to dictate the individual in his personal development. They condemned social oppression upon the women and the backward classes and asked these classes to revolt against the exploitation. They not only urged for social reform but took active part in it. Vivekananda, in his eloquent lectures, pleaded for liberty of the individual. Rabindranath maintained that all national good depends upon greatness of the individuals. M.K. Gandhi who stood for *Sarvodaya* considered everyone including a Harijan girl to be

equal to any other in society. He almost waged a war against **untouchability** in India. Sri Aurobindo, however, was never so **eloquent on this issue**.

THE HUMAN NATURE

Contemporary Indian philosophers considered human nature as essentially divine. They did not accept Western definition of man as a rational animal. Man, according to them, is neither animal alone nor his highest characteristic is rationality. Indian philosophy always considered man as a part of Divine and spirituality its essential characteristic. Man is an individual expression of the spiritual Absolute. This ancient Indian idea explains nature of man according to Vivekananda, Dayananda, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi. Thus their explanation of human nature was almost identical. Therefore they built up very much similar social philosophies.

THE SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

As the individual is the expression of Divine, similarly society is also the expression of Divine. According to ancient Indian philosophy while man is an individual expression of the Divine the society is a collective expression of the same. This definition of society was followed by contemporary Indian philosophers. It is hence that they advocated the dictum that service of man is service to God. Their definition of society was thus different from the western definition advanced by social thinkers and sociologists. This again, explains their view concerning the relationship of the society and the individual. While in the West we find individualist, collectivist and middle of the road approaches concerning the relationship of individual and society, contemporary Indian philosophers considered them as two expressions of the same Divine, one in individuality another in collectivity. Since essentially both are the same, therefore the rules governing the life of the individual and the society are similar. Both aim at God-realisation that is the maximum expression of spiritual traits of the Absolute. Ancient Indian philosophers considered existence, consciousness and bliss as essential characteristics of the Absolute. Our contemporary philosophers, in tradition with the ancient

Indian philosophy, agree that both the individual and the society have a right to exist, to grow and to enjoy their lives on this earth. This is applicable to every individual however lowly may be his status in society without distinction of race, caste, sex, creed or nationality.

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Worship of Daridra Narayan

In the understanding of contemporary Indian philosophy not only the metaphysical background but also philosophy of religion plays an important part because whatever we may say about the ideal of secularism in India, Indian philosophers have always been essentially religious. Contemporary Indian philosophers were intensely religious persons. Their religion was the religion of the Upanishads. Their scripture was the *Bhagwadgita*. Therefore, the aim of life according to them was God realisation. They interpreted religion however, in a different way. Before them emphasis was laid on dogma and ritualism in religion. These philosophers, on the other hand, considered dogmas and rituals unnecessary for religion. They laid emphasis upon service of mankind as the best means of service to God. They even worshipped *Daridranarayana*, God among poor. Thus throughout their life they struggled for the uplift of the general masses. This struggle, however, was a part of their religion. Thus their religion may be called humanist religion or religion of man. In this religion man occupied the central place and it was through man that God had to be realised. Thus while ancient emphasis in the religious relationship between Man and God was on God, the emphasis of these philosophers was on man.

Comprehensive view of Religion

Religion was interpreted by these philosophers in the most comprehensive sense. All life is religion, therefore a religious man has to religiously act not only in personal but also in social and political life. It is hence that all these thinkers, though essentially religious persons, took to social reforms and vehemently demanded political freedom. Vivekananda admitted that his main field was the preaching of Vedanta philosophy and religion, but he could not restrain himself from preaching for throwing up of the foreign yoke and achieve political freedom of the motherland.

His patriotic utterings were so sentimental that though he always said that politics is not his concern, his utterings encouraged Indian masses to political movement. Tagore, in spite of his preoccupation with literature and education, was always concerned with all the political developments in the country. In spite of being a cosmopolitan and an internationalist even to the extent of sometimes criticising nationalism, Tagore vehemently opposed British rule in India. M.K. Gandhi, essentially a religious man, considered it his religion to throw himself heart and soul in politics and to lead Indian national movement. Sri Aurobindo was a great revolutionary and political thinker. Thus the social and political thinking of these great men was basically inspired by their philosophy of religion.

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Praise of Varna System

No society can live without some sort of stratification whatever may be its basis. The ancient Indian theory of social stratification was Varna system. Varna system was essentially a religious and spiritual idea of division of labour. According to this theory the divine force expresses itself in different forms in different individuals in society. Thus men are born with different aptitudes, capacities, dispositions, temperaments, physiques etc. This natural distinction shows the richness of divine manifestation. Therefore the best form of social planning can be to distinguish people according to their innate capacities and dispositions and to allot them social roles accordingly. A collective life requires complementary roles. It is hampered by overlapping and contradictory roles. Though processes like conflict and competition have their value in society, more value should be given to social processes like cooperation etc. The varna system was scientific as well as spiritual. Modern science supports the principle that since men are born different they should be given different roles in society. Therefore contemporary Indian philosophers were all praise for ancient Varna system. They considered it as most scientific and most in keeping with the spiritual needs. They were however, equally critical of caste system. They condemned casteism in very clear terms. They waged a war against casteism. But they did not consider caste itself an evil. Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo openly supported caste system as better than class system. Tagore and

Gandhi, though very much critical of casteism and untouchability did not think that the elimination of these evils requires an absolute elimination of caste system. They also did not consider the Western class system as better than the Indian caste system.

Tyranny of Higher Classes

The progress of a society very much depends upon harmonious relationship among different classes. It is a historical fact that since each society consists of more than one class, these classes have always been conflicting to gain supremacy over the others. Thus in the West the capitalist class exploited the labourers and in India Brahmins held supremacy over not only Shudra but also the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas. As a result everywhere social thinkers raised their voice against the tyranny of one class over another. In the West Karl Marx declared the death of capitalism as inevitable and asked the labourers to get united to achieve this purpose. Communist thinkers pleaded for complete extermination of the capitalist class. The capitalist thinkers, on the other hand, though never openly pleading for capitalism, maintained that it need not conflict with the welfare of any class and there can be a harmony between the capitalists and the labourers. In India the pitiable condition of the scheduled castes and their glaring disabilities led contemporary Indian philosophers to raise their voice against the tyranny of higher castes over the lower castes. They warned the higher classes that unless they change their attitude they have no future. On the other hand, they urged the backward classes to arise and awake and come upto a status equal if not better than the higher castes.

Anti-Untouchability Movement

Vivekananda was no less eloquent than Tagore and Gandhi in chiding the higher classes for their tyranny. Ramakrishna mission carried on valuable activities for the uplift of backward classes. Tagore, while describing the horrowing condition of the backward classes in his novels, analysed their causes and pleaded for their betterment. His attempts for social reforms however, were mainly confined to the area of his Zamindari. Gandhi, on the other hand, waged a country-wide movement against untouchability. He was perhaps the greatest spokesman of the backward classes. It was simply because of his life-long struggle against this social tyranny that national government in India has paid so much attention for the welfare of the backward classes.

Inter-Caste Relationships

There is however, one significant difference concerning the relationship of classes in the Western and Indian social philosophy. While Karl Marx pleaded for elimination of the capitalist class, our Indian social thinkers did not consider the elimination of any class necessary for the welfare of others. Though with Karl Marx they also cherished a classless society but their classless society meant a harmonious relationship among different classes rather than elimination of any class. This emphasis on harmony has been characteristic of Indian culture and therefore of Indian thought in social and political fields. It should be remembered that even in the days of intense opposition of the British rule in India, contemporary Indian philosophers always made it clear that our struggle was against the foreign rule and never against the British people. On the other hand, all of them cherished the idea of a common wealth of nations. It is hence that after the disintegration of British Empire into independent nationalities a bond of integration was maintained in the form of the present commonwealth of nations.

Uplift of Indian Women

Besides the scheduled castes contemporary Indian philosophers were equally concerned with the lower status of Indian women. They urged them to be educated and to come out to become equal to males. They encouraged them to solve their problems themselves and to grow as human beings. They pleaded for their liberty and equality. They however, did not support the western ideal of woman. They praised the sufferings and sacrifices of Indian women and their contribution to the growth of Indian society. They however, pointed out that they should not imitate the western ideals. The philosophy of male-female relationships is again based upon Indian ideal of harmony. As in social and economic classes so in classes based upon sex contemporary Indian social philosophers considered conflict as unnecessary and undesirable. They always pleaded for harmony and cooperation though never agreed with exploitation of either by the other. Thus in spite of their strong support to efforts for women regeneration in India they were different from the feminists of the West.

MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Humanist Religious Ethics

Contemporary Indian philosophers have given an important place to ethics in their social philosophy. While Vivekananda pointed out that lack of moral character is the main cause of the downfall of India, M.K. Gandhi synthesized ethics with politics and ethics with economics. Thus he took ethics in a most comprehensive sense. Without a moral base no social or political reform is possible. Tagore, in his novels, elaborated the moral principles necessary for maintaining social organisation. All these philosophers were vehemently against any sort of exploitation, misuse of power, oppression or causing any sort of disabilities to any human being on the basis of race, caste, sex, economic status or creed etc. In brief, their moral philosophy was humanist on the one hand and religious on the other. God realisation was the *summum bonum* according to them. Service to human beings was the best means.

Purity of Ends and Means

As opposed to those thinkers who consider end as defining the means, these thinkers have insisted upon purity of means in order to realise high ends. While Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo sometimes favoured use of force, Gandhian moral philosophy considered non-violence as the highest value. Tagore agreed with Gandhi in his emphasis on non-violent means for realizing social and political ends. It is so because Indian philosophers never hankered after immediate ends but always sought the ultimate good. Such ultimate good is possible only when there is a harmony between ends and means.

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

While Karl Marx, and some Indian thinkers influenced by him, considered economic sources as determining the history, contemporary Indian philosophers have interpreted history as a divine process. This is in keeping with ancient Indian philosophy of history. But on the other hand, in tune with the modern consciousness, they pointed out that all history must be re-written from the point of view of the role of the masses rather than the

kings. History so far has been considered as a narration of the deeds of the kings and war lords. These thinkers pointed out that the role of the masses is no less important in any political or social event. In fact, they considered masses as the true determiners of history. Their interpretation may be called divine determinism as against economic determinism. In this divine determinism, however, as has been pointed out by the *Bhagwadgita*, man is not merely a passive instrument. Though ultimately the Divine determines the historical events, man can participate effectively in this process and in this lies his manhood. Thus social evolution and social change need not wait for divine interference. God determinism is not fatalism. Moreover, God is always on the side of man. Therefore, history is proceeding towards progress in human values. These thinkers were optimist in the sense that they thought that humanity is gradually progressing towards more and more expression of divinity. Therefore they had a deep faith in the spiritual future of man.

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Religious Basis of Politics

None of our contemporary philosophers was a politician or political scientist in the academic sense of the term. They were first religious persons and their political activity was a direct result of their spiritual leanings. Gandhi considered political activity a religious duty. Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo pleaded for social and political regeneration in the name of Vedanta. Tagore placed man at the centre of his philosophy and considered politics a part of religion of man. Thus the political philosophy of Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Gandhi is based on their metaphysical beliefs and philosophy of religion.

The State and the Individual

In tradition with Indian philosophy contemporary Indian philosophers considered individual freedom as absolutely necessary for any spiritual growth. Therefore, they wanted to limit the state power to the extent of arranging physical goods and managing inter-relationships of the individuals. The state has no right to interfere in the mental and spiritual activities of the individual. This however, does not mean that they thought of a stateless

society. In tradition with ancient Indian political thought they believed that the state has a useful function to perform. In fact, Indian political philosophers never thought that the conflict of the state and the individual is inevitable. Harmony has been the central principle of Indian thought, in social as well as political matters. Therefore there should be a harmony between the rights and duties of the state and the individual.

Limitation of State Power

According to Gandhi the laws of the state must be obeyed by every citizen but when the state becomes an oppressor the individual has a moral right to oppose the state. This opposition should be however, by non-violent means such as non-cooperation or *Satyagraha*, etc. It should never be by violent means. The thinking of Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Tagore is almost similar to that of Gandhi. They have however, not thought sufficiently over this problem because while Gandhi was in the fore-front of Indian political activity, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, and Vivekananda were not so much immersed in it. Gandhian concept of limitation and opposition of state power is important because it guided the Indian National movement against the British people. In this movement Gandhi pleaded for giving more and more rights to the citizens and limiting the state power purely to administrative and economic functions. Even the judiciary functions could be done by the agencies of local self-government such as *panchayats* etc.

Decentralization

India is a vast country. Agriculture is the main profession here. Both these factors are important in political philosophy. Such a vast country cannot be governed by an overcentralized political authority. Therefore, Indian political thinkers, since ancient times, always pleaded for decentralization of political power. This decentralization was mainly in the form of giving almost all the rights to the village *panchayats*. In his scheme of ideal democracy in India Gandhi envisaged that every village should have a *panchayat*, which should be given all the economic, social and political rights about the administration of the unit. Whatever the government has to do should be done through *panchayat*. Only the police work requires government interference. Even the economic and judicial matters may be decided by the *panchayat*.

This idea was accepted by Tagore as well as who established panchayat in every village of his big Zamindari and himself looked after their efficient working. Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo have praised the ancient Indian system of decentralization through village panchayats. All these thinkers were against centralization in the economic field as well. Therefore, they pleaded for small scale and cottage industries. This is also due to their emphasis on the virtue of self-reliance. Self-reliance can be developed only through decentralization.

Intense Patriotism

Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo were great patriots of India. Through their fiery lectures they diffused a sentimental patriotism in the masses which almost amounted to the worship of the motherland. To them patriotism was the greatest virtue and therefore they asked their countrymen to awake and arise so that India may find its proper place in the community of nations. Tagore, though not so much sentimental in his patriotism, was no less a patriot than any other. As a protest against British firing in Jalianwalabagh he returned all the certificates and honours conferred by the British Govt. upon him. Whenever there was any serious occasion in national movement Tagore always raised his voice and expressed his views to his countrymen. Gandhi was the greatest leader of the patriots in national movement. It was under his able guidance that the Indian masses could overthrow the British rule and achieved independence.

Staunch Nationalism

All these thinkers were staunch nationalists. They accepted that each nation in the world has a right to develop its individuality and others should not interfere in it. Sovereignty is essential for a nation. Besides sovereignty a nation also requires a common national language. Vivekananda, Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi, therefore, pleaded for complete independence of the country from British rule. They advocated the teaching of Sanskrit. Here Vivekananda was extreme in his emphasis upon making Sanskrit a national language. This was not acceptable to M.K. Gandhi, a man of the masses who wanted this place to be given to Hindustani in Devanagri script. Tagore and Sri Aurobindo also accepted this formula though they themselves were also in favour of retaining the teaching of English in India. All of these

however agreed that propagation of national language will help in constituting a nation. Another constituent of a nation, according to Vivekananda, is religion. This religion, according to Vivekananda, was Hindu. Tagore, on the other hand, was more cosmopolitan in his approach. He did not consider religion as essential for a nation and if at all a religion was required that should be a religion of humanity. Gandhi, the political leader of all the sections of Indian masses, could not ignore the religion of any section. Therefore, he pleaded for religious tolerance. In his evening prayer *Koran* and *Bible* were recited alongwith *Bhagwadgita*.

Synthetic Approach to Religion

Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Gandhi advocated a synthetic approach to religion. This synthetic approach to religion was the essence of the teachings of Ramakrishna, the spiritual Guru of Vivekananda. Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo preached for unity of world religion. M.K. Gandhi suggested that we can develop national religion by synthesis of all the important religions. This synthetic approach to religion, advocated by these thinkers was essentially based upon their faith in Vedanta philosophy.

Internationalism

Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Gandhi were born in a time when the Indian people were feeling the oppression of British rule in India and opposing it tooth and nail. It was an ideal atmosphere for the awakening of national consciousness. This was done by all of the contemporary Indian philosophers. They were however, against national chauvinism and national egoism. They, on the other hand, presented a concept of spiritual nationalism. Spiritual nationalism is not opposed to internationalism. Therefore, all these thinkers were internationalists in spite of being nationalists. Nationalism was exhibited in sentimental form by Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo and in a lesser tone by M.K. Gandhi. Tagore even sometimes condemned it as a narrow mentality, a hindrance to internationalism.

East and West

At the time when these thinkers were active, the West was gradually coming to know the East. In this process of introducing the East to the West Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi and Vivekananda performed a service unparalleled by any other

thinkers of the East. Tagore was the first Indian to be awarded noble prize for literature, the highest award for excellence in a field in the West. Vivekananda, through his lectures on Vedanta, introduced Indian philosophy and religion and also ideas about social and political thinking to the West. His lectures were widely attended and intensely praised. Books by Sri Aurobindo and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, concerning Indian philosophy, find thousands of interested readers in the West. M.K. Gandhi was a political leader in Africa even before coming to India. His introduction of non-violent means in politics made him an international political thinker. Ever since he introduced them they were discussed by eminent political thinkers of the West. Thus these thinkers could manage to arouse a sense of admiration of the East in the West. They were also conscious of the contribution of the West to the East and they did acknowledge it. On the other hand they pleaded upon the western elite to know the East and to follow it particularly in spiritual matters. Thus Tagore, Gandhi and Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan stood for a synthesis of East and West, spirituality and science, peace and activity.

Forms of Government

As these thinkers were very much concerned with the regeneration of masses in India they naturally pondered over various forms of Government, advanced their criticism and suggested for the ideal form of government. They were critical of monarchy, oligarchy, and aristocracy or any such form of government which did not accept the principles of equality and liberty. Therefore, the ideal form of government according to them, can be such in which all the citizens enjoy equality and liberty. The ideal government again is self-government. As absolute self-government is not possible, there may be some minimum form of governing in a country. But self-government should be encouraged more and more. It is hence that these thinkers advocated the panchayat rule in the villages.

Spiritual Democracy

Thus Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, Tagore and Gandhi considered democracy as the ideal form of Government. They, however, advanced a spiritual interpretation of liberty, equality and fraternity, the three chief values of democracy. A special characteristics of this spiritual interpretation was realization

of harmony between the three ideals. Thus they pleaded for the establishment of spiritual democracy, a form of government in which maximum number of people may secure maximum liberty and equality and achieve spiritual fraternity between them. As against the British rule in India they pleaded for self-rule that is *Swarajya*. The reason for this however, was religious and spiritual. *Swarajya* is closely linked with the idea of *Swadharma* and it is absolutely necessary for any spiritual progress.

ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY

Economic Regeneration of Masses

Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Gandhi were equally concerned with the pitiable condition of the poor masses in India. They were pained to see the wide gulf between the rich and the poor in this country. They pleaded for providing bread and home to everyone. They had an intimate knowledge of the problems of the labourers and they had great respect for them. They were convinced that the future of the country depended not so much upon those who worked through the mind but upon those who worked by hand. The future of the country depends upon farmers and the labourers and less upon the so-called elite. All these were worshippers of the masses. Therefore, they presented an economic philosophy in which an economic re-generation of Indian masses may be possible. India is an agricultural country. Therefore, they suggested improvements in agriculture. Vivekananda, Tagore and Gandhi were against the establishment of big industries in private or public sectors. Big industries in public sector may be established to manufacture only those machines which are required for cottage industries. Since manpower in India is very cheap, the country hardly requires machine power. Introduction of machine power, on the other hand, throws man-power out of employment. Therefore, these thinkers were against the mechanisation and introduction of large scale industries. Another reason for this opposition is their faith in the traditional economic philosophy of minimising needs. Indian thinkers have always insisted upon minimising needs, rather than the enjoyment of comforts and needs. *Aparigraha* has always been considered a great virtue in this country. Indian philosophers believed that where wealth accumulates man degenerates. Therefore, they have always been against accumulation of wealth and even if wealth

is acquired it should be used not for selfish ends but for social good. It was with this background that Gandhi presented the ideal of trusteeship of the rich man. The rich man is a trustee of his wealth and he should use it for the good of the people.

Thus in spite of issuing severe warning to the hoarders, the capitalists and the mill owners against exploitation of the masses, Vivekananda, Tagore and Gandhi did not consider class struggle and class hatred as necessary for the economic regeneration of the country. They hoped that the capitalists and the rich men may be persuaded to provide for welfare of the labourers. They thought that encouraging hatred and violence in any section will ultimately diffuse them in society. Therefore they were against the Marxist idea of waging a violent war against capitalism. They wanted a revolution but insisted that this revolution should be absolutely non-violent as a violent revolution is bound to have its reactions to the opposite direction in future.

Swadeshi and Boycott

The economic philosophy of these thinkers was very much linked with the practical programmes of economic regeneration of the country which they suggested from time to time. An important idea in this programme was their insistence on Swadeshi and Boycott of the foreign goods. The idea of Swadeshi is closely linked with the ideals of *Swadharma* and *Swarajya*. M.K. Gandhi chalked out a whole programme for economic regeneration of the country. This programme included spinning and weaving of cloth, small scale industries, cooperative farming, improving the stock of animals and so on.

IDEAL AND MEANS OF SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

The Ideal of *Sarvodaya*

The Ideal of social reconstruction according to Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, and Gandhi may be summed up in the Gandhian concept of *sarvodaya*. This ideal was not the welfare of a particular section or even of that of the maximum number but the welfare of all. Therefore, the schemes of reconstruction particularly insisted upon the progress of backward classes such as women, poor, and the scheduled caste etc. This is so because these thinkers were convinced that unless the backward classes are brought forward

society cannot progress. About the means of social reconstruction these thinkers generally emphasised non-violence and Swadeshi. Non-violence in social and economic field means abstaining from injuring others' social and economic rights. It means elimination of all exploitation. This, however, does not require expropriation of the expropriators. It could be done by creating awakening in the masses and by persuading the exploiters to desist from this immoral activity and to realise their real selves.

Means of Social Reconstruction

All of our contemporary Indian philosophers were intimately aware of the backwardness prevailing in the country. According to Vivekananda the chief causes responsible for India's degeneration are absence of *Sraddha*, Anglicised spirit, Dishonesty, Disregard for physical well-being etc., Fall of *Kshatra* spirit, Fear-complex, lack of originality and enterprise, laziness, narrowness, neglect of religion, etc. He suggested three important remedies to these evils – emancipation of women, uplift of the masses and positive education. The position of Tagore and Gandhi is almost similar to that of Vivekananda here. They were also conscious of the above mentioned defects and they also laid emphasis upon uplift of women and backward classes, uplift of the masses and provision of positive education. Both Tagore and Gandhi suggested several important means of social reconstruction.

Integral Education

The education ideals advocated by these thinkers were very much similar and in tune with ancient Indian philosophy of education. The ideal of education was the alround evolution of the child. They laid emphasis upon the moral and religious education particularly so that spiritual qualities may be developed. They considered for a separate syllabi for human education. They insisted upon the need of compulsory and free primary education through mother tongue.

CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

During the period when Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, Tagore and Gandhi were active, the most prevalent social philosophies were represented by capitalism, socialism and

communism. Being highly educated and also having occasion to come in direct contact of the West where these were being practised, these philosophers fully realised the advantages and disadvantages of these systems. In their opposition to capitalism they were with Karl Marx and other anti-capitalist thinkers. They admired socialism, particularly its creed of equality and liberty. They however did not agree with the western type of socialism which was brought about primarily by means of class war. They presented a spiritual or vedantic interpretation of socialism. They condemned the ideology of communism as it involved violence and dictatorship of a section over the other. They agreed with anarchism so far as minimising the functions of the state is concerned but they knew that the state cannot be absolutely eliminated. They, on the other hand, wanted to maintain it as an agency of social welfare in subordination to the people.

SPIRITUAL HUMANISM

The alternative to socialism and communism, as suggested by contemporary Indian philosophers may be called spiritual humanism. As has been already pointed out, they gave a spiritual interpretation to democracy and socialism. They wanted to establish a spiritual society leading to spiritual progress of the individual and ultimately of all humanity. They were humanist since they placed man in the centre of their philosophies – social, economic and political. In spiritual humanism the lower unit is not subordinate to the higher nor is it eliminated in its progress to the higher. The higher, on the other hand, integrates the lower and achieves its total evolution. Thus in a spiritual society the individual achieves maximum liberty and equality. Inter-personal relationships are guided by the spiritual ideal of fraternity. Nationalism progresses towards spiritual level in which all the constituents of the nation achieve spiritual progress. Elimination of national egoism and its substitution by spirituality is a permanent safeguard against future universal catastrophies. Thus peace and prosperity may be established on the earth. International relations may be based upon the principle of harmony and tolerance so that the whole humanity may develop as one community. Religions need not conflict as in a synthetic approach they all appear as different approaches to the same one spirit.

Characteristics of Contemporary Humanism

This humanism expresses itself most clearly in contemporary Indian socio-political thought through the following characteristic features:

1. From the viewpoint of metaphysics, the social philosophy of these thinkers grants a central place to man. Despite his traditionalist leanings, Sri Aurobindo has accepted man as the higher and real manifestation of the supreme reality in the evolution of the universe. He has also declared that man's evolution will mean the future of cosmic evolution. Other thinkers have been even more explicit in the importance that they have attached to man.

2. In the philosophy of religion, these thinkers believe man to possess a central place, and even in his relationship with God, they continue to grant him existence. Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath and M.K. Gandhi do not believe that man loses his own existence, or that his existence becomes merged with God even in the supreme religious condition. Instead, they have stressed his independent existence. It is from the humanist standpoint that Rabindranath refers to his religion as a religion of man, or religion of humanity, while M.K. Gandhi argues that the supreme religion is service of humanity. Jawahar Lal Nehru also believed that man is of supreme importance, and it is because of this that he does not accept the reality of any entity superior to man. Manvendra Roy, too, has argued that religion of any kind is inessential. In this way, there may be a difference of opinion between the traditional thinkers and those influenced by Western thought about the importance of religion in society, but they all manifest a humanist viewpoint in the sphere of religion.

3. These thinkers have granted a focal place to man even in their philosophy of history. Since man is converted into a mere tool of material forces in the materialism of Karl Marx, these thinkers have refuted the notion of economic determinism. All of them have accepted the importance of human individuals in history, and they have given a noteworthy place to great men. On the other hand, all these philosophers also regard the common man as important and believe that the true process of history is the evolution in the consciousness of this common man. The humanist viewpoint in the philosophy of history is not clearly manifested in the psychological explanation of history provided by Sri Aurobindo. It should be remembered that psychology is essentially

a human science which studies human beings. Thus, it is better to accept psychological forces as the determinants of history. From this point of view, Sri Aurobindo, among the contemporary Indian political thinkers, made the most notable contribution to the philosophy of history. Humanism is also the basis of M.K. Gandhi's non-violent philosophy of history because, as he says, while violence is the characteristic of the animal, non-violence is man's typical trait. In their analysis of the evolution of world cultures, Rabindranath and Jawahar Lal Nehru have also demonstrated the growth towards human values.

4. Because of their humanistic explanation of the philosophy of history, these thinkers advocated a humanistic concept of social progress. According to this concept the criterion of the progress of a society is the degree or extent to which that society gives importance to human values. In other words, the greater the importance attached to human values in a society, the greater is the degree of social progress in it.

5. Since these thinkers accept synthesis as their philosophical base, they believe that the individual and the collective group, the citizen and the state are mutually complementary entities. None of them has advocated anarchism. They are neither individualists nor collectivists, they believe that one is impossible without the other. According to them, individual and collective welfare are mutually complementary, between which there is no difference. Though some of these thinkers demonstrated a parallel relationship between the individual and the group because of the intimate relationship between the two, their synthetical viewpoint makes them better fitted for solving the problems of the relationship between the individual and the group. Since the state is a man-made institution, in other words, a means or a tool, these thinkers, in keeping with the ancient Indian tradition, treat society and not the state as prominent. The state is only a means to the welfare of society. But this does not imply that it can be completely eradicated. In view of the structure of human nature, the state is necessary. However, it should be employed solely as a means to human welfare.

6. It follows, therefore, that the state does not have the right to interfere in the individual's freedom under any circumstances. Laws are made not to eradicate, destroy or undermine freedom but to ensure its safety. This alone is the basis of their acceptance and compulsion. If they fail to provide this security, they can be

violated, but under all other circumstances, they must be obeyed. The purpose of the law is to bring about justice of every kind – social, economic, or of any other kind. Its ultimate basis is humanism or humanistic values. Every individual should be provided with the best opportunities for every kind of growth. This is the highest objective of law. Hence, freedom and law are mutually complementary and for justice, both are equally important.

7. Consequently, all these thinkers regard that state as the ideal which can make provision for every kind of progress, which can provide for every class and every individual in society without any discrimination, which gives the individual the maximum freedom for his integral development and where the law is the protector and not the destroyer of this freedom. M.K. Gandhi gave the name of 'Ram Rajya' to this ideal state and while Jawahar Lal Nehru called it the socialist state. Manvendra Roy gave it the name radical democracy. Thus, there is no fundamental distinction between the various concepts of an ideal state advanced by all contemporary Indian political thinkers from Sri Aurobindo to Manvendra Roy.

8. Hence, the supreme form of government is that which can bring about the existence of this ideal state. Because of this attitude, these thinkers were critical of anarchism on the one hand and fascism, autocracy, oligarchy, aristocracy etc. on the other. This criticism was consistently based on humanist criterion. The government is merely a tool for administering the state, and the objective of this instrument is to create the ideal state.

9. It follows from the above, therefore, that the ideal form of government is democracy. And, even in democracy, these thinkers advocate the form of spiritual democracy so that the highest worth may be attached to spiritual values. Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath and M.K. Gandhi have been specific in their advocacy of a spiritualistic democracy. Roy's radical democracy is also the same. The concept of a spiritualistic democracy is a basically humanistic concept about the form of government. Consequently, it is the one ideal for every nation.

10. From the humanist angle, these thinkers have founded politics on ethics. This characteristic undoubtedly renders their thinking contemporary in the history of political thought. It is the basis of the future development of political science. Medieval political thought was not humanist whereas modern political

thought is markedly humanist. Consequently, the medieval solutions posited by medieval political thought cannot be adequate guides for the present age.

11. It is for this reason that in national movements or political revolutions it is necessary to pay attention to both ends and means. These thinkers have emphasized that even in the principles of political change, the humanist bias should not be disturbed. As a result all of them favour non-violent means and seek to eradicate violent means to the extent possible. A theory of this kind unquestionably grants a humanist bias to the concept of revolution. That is why these thinkers are severe critics of the Marxist doctrine.

12. As they are fundamentally humanists, their philosophy of education is also humanistic, the objective of which is to bring about the development of human values in every citizen through psychological means. In their opinion, such an education should be imparted through the mother tongue. The objective of its curriculum should be to generate, not a nationalistic feeling, but a humanistic feeling. From this point of view, education not of any one specific kind, but every kind of education, such as cultural, scientific, technical, ethical, aesthetic, religious and spiritual, is essential.

13. In fine, education should be a medium for the evolution of a generation which is humanistic, which regards nationalism as only one step in the growth towards internationalism. Assuming that unity in diversity is a basic element, these thinkers do not interpret humanism to mean the destruction of diversity. Instead, they want to maintain the individual identity of each nation within the framework of internationalism.

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Stamp of Indian Culture

Thus in contemporary philosophy one finds an indelible stamp of Indian culture. Contemporary Indian philosophy has not chalked out a path deviating with the past. It is in tradition with Indian culture. It is based upon age old philosophical traditions of the land mainly represented by the vedanta philosophy. Spiritualism or idealism was first presented in India in the philosophy of Vedanta. This was the dominant trend of ancient Indian thought

and it continued to dominate the philosophical thinking even in the contemporary time. The social implications of the ancient Indian spiritualism can be seen in the contemporary social philosophy particularly those of Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Gandhi. They presented a social philosophy based upon neo-vedanta metaphysics.

Neo-Vedanta Metaphysics

The metaphysical background of contemporary Indian philosophy may be called Neo-vedanta. Neo-vedanta metaphysics was the old vedanta philosophy in a new garb. In it the Vedanta philosophy was re-interpreted according to the contemporary needs. But the fundamental spirit of the Vedanta philosophy remained the same. According to Vedanta philosophy, the totality is spiritual in nature known as the Brahman. Individuality and collectivity are the expressions of this spiritual essential unity. Therefore, the principles governing individuality and collectivity are the same.

Thus Vedanta philosophy helps us in deriving useful implications for social philosophy. For example it may be inferred that the life of the individual and the society is governed by identical principles and this understanding may give sound guidance in solving the problem of the relationship of the individual and the collectivity. But, on the other hand, the idea that collectivity and individuality are expressions of the divine power, coupled with the Karma theory and the theory of rebirth has resulted in social escapism, exploitation of the weak and indifference to the social good. In tradition with ancient Indian vedanta the neo-vedanta thinkers pointed out to one essence underlying different philosophies – religious, social thinking, individuals and nationalities. This gave a unified world view but since the world was not considered as much real as the Absolute it undermined the status of social philosophy.

Undermining of social Philosophy

Mayavada has been the chief reason for undermining social philosophy in ancient Indian thought. Other reasons were philosophical, psychological and sociological. Among the philosophical reasons extra-terrestrial goal of life of the form of *Moksha* and the undervaluing of worldly knowledge as ignorance, together with considering social life as means and not as an end were the important reasons. These philosophical reasons continued to work

in contemporary Indian metaphysics as well. One finds the same emphasis on *Moksha* as the aim of life and the contemporary Indian philosophies do not give any new interpretation to it. Only Sri Aurobindo distinguished between the ideal of individual liberation and cosmic liberation and considered the latter and not the former as the goal of life. This was a good corrective to extra-terrestrial bias but the use of the word *Moksha* has been constantly creating misunderstanding with the result that generally even now it is being taken as extra-terrestrial goal.

Negation of Worldly Knowledge

Ancient Indian Vedanta considered wordly knowledge as knowledge of phenomena and not knowledge of noumena and since the latter were the real knowledge they called the knowledge of the world an ignorance. This again, was not challenged by our contemporary Indian philosophers though each one of them clearly said that the wordly knowledge is very important for individual and society. Again, though they considered social service, service of the poor and the weak as primary duties, they were always means and never ends. Now, if service of man is a mere means for God realisation no wonder that it is left aside by those who pursue other means such as prayer, penance, devotion or knowledge etc. Though in theory it appears that the Vedanta philosophy finds a place for social service, in actual practice it has never been so. This is the reason why decades after the preachings of these philosophers contemporary Indian society finds a very insignificant place for humanistic ideals or social service.

The psychological reasons for the undermining of social philosophy in ancient Indian thought have been active in our contemporary times as well. Ancient Indian thinkers and most of the religious people even now consider God realisation possible by the negation of the world. Most of the techniques of the spiritual practice even today are individualistic in character as they were in ancient India. Facts have been neglected, particularly the social facts. Indian philosophers laid more emphasis on the knowledge and devotion than on action and in spite of the protests of some activist thinkers like B.G. Tilak and M.K. Gandhi this emphasis has continued in our own time. There is small wonder therefore that social philosophy has been neglected.

In spite of all efforts about industrial progress in India the country even today is primarily agricultural. Therefore the

sociological reasons determining the sorry state of social thinking of ancient India continue right now. Contemporary Indian society is primarily agricultural and therefore slow changing, tradition-minded, against new changes, anti-revolutionary, and narrow in outlook. Among the intelligentsia also the traditional trend of thinking being more dominant there has not been much change in the attitude of social thinkers.

The defects of Mayavada

An analysis of the social thought of Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath and M.K. Gandhi shows that the philosophical foundation of their thought was the Neo-Vedanta philosophy. This system of thought is Vedanta first and neo, or its novel form latter. As far as the Vedanta philosophy is concerned, it assumes the *Sachchidananda Param Brahman* to be the prime substance. According to it, all individuals and all nations are the varied manifestations of the same Reality Brahman. In this way, the variety of the human race finds its ultimate identity in Brahman. However, the Vedanta philosophy, in its ancient form, did not explicitly accept the reality of the universe. As a matter of fact, of all the commentaries written on Vedanta philosophy, the most current and widely circulated has been Shankaracharya's commentary or the Advaita philosophy. Although Shankaracharya was truly the greatest social and political reformer of his age, and a symbol of unification of the nation the principle propounded by him that the world is maya, became one of the cause of backwardness of social and political thinking in this country. Although contemporary Indian social thinkers sought rational and practical solutions to them they never really succeeded in erasing the stamp of mayavada from their thought. The sole exception to this was Sri Aurobindo. M.K. Gandhi's philosophy shows clear impress of mayavada on almost every aspect of his thought. Rabindranath's thought falls into the same class, though his humanism saves him from deteriorating into escapism. One important reason for his escaping the deep imprint of mayavada was that he was mainly a poet while M.K. Gandhi was primarily a political leader. Sri Aurobindo alone was a pure philosopher, and so he was best fitted to challenge and refute mayavada, and to provide an alternative to it in the form of Leelavada, which he established. Nevertheless, the influence of mayavada, as propounded in the ancient Vedanta, remained consistently opposed to aggressive thought and action in the social and political fields in India.

Integralism

However, while Neo-Vedanta was in essence, Vedanta was nevertheless a novel form of it. Its novelty is the result of the influence of such currents of thought as the influence of science, humanism, individualism, realism, the synthesis of all religions, etc. In fact, the Neo-Vedanta philosophy did much to encourage the viewpoint of unity in diversity. In ancient Indian thought in the social field, the principle of Vedanta philosophy was that of 'swadharma' i.e., acting according to one's own nature and situation. Consequently, despite evident differences, it is wrong to consider one as big or small, more or less important. There is no doubt that on the basis of such a philosophical foundation it is possible to bring about a synthesis of the individual and the collectivity, freedom and law, ethics and politics, society and religion, nationalism and internationalism. It is because of this that the Neo-Vedanta philosophy is much more practical than Vedanta philosophy. For the same reason it is possible to discover scientific, rationalistic, freedom-oriented, socialistic, integral and pluralistic tendencies in the ideas of these philosophers.

One-Sided Interpretation of History

We have already pointed out that our contemporary Indian thinkers have interpreted history as a Divine process. While the disadvantages of the economic interpretation of history, are obvious, spiritual interpretation also has its own limitations. In spite of all the emphasis on human efforts by our social thinkers the general masses and even the elite have on the whole been depending upon providence. The ancient message of Gita that whenever the society faces a challenge, God comes in the form of a reincarnation, has only encouraged popular indolence and passivity since the people have been waiting for such an incarnation. Our religious leaders have always had faith in miracles. Therefore, there is no wonder that the people, instead of making efforts for reform or revolution, have been waiting for miracles on the part of the God to ameliorate their condition. However sincere may be the efforts of our contemporary philosophers and whatever inner meaning they might have given to their interpretation of history, its impact on masses and even on elite has not been very healthy. Probably it is due to the reason that in their philosophy of history facts and human planning and efforts never found sufficient place.

Contradiction in Philosophy of Religion

In the field of religion the synthetic approach, presented by our contemporary philosophers, has been definitely an improvement. It has led to religious tolerance and catholicity very much needed in this country. And yet at the same time Sri Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, Gandhi and Vivekananda were proud of being Hindu. They undoubtedly knew the defects of Hindu religion and yet they pleaded that every one should follow his own religion. The Gandhian formula of recitation from Bible, Quran and Gita in his daily prayer appeared to be hotch-potch to many of the more serious thinkers. Besides Gandhian synthesis of religion and politics also led to mixing of religion with politics by others who misused it to the disadvantage of the country at large. M.A. Jinnah organized followers of Muslim religion and demanded a separate part of the country for them. In spite of the heroic fight of Gandhi against Jinnah the latter won the game. Whatever may be the reasons behind this disaster one academic reason may be the unsuitable marriage of politics with religion. Gandhi called himself a religious man and considered it his religious duty to delve in politics. On the other hand some may say that politics has been generally a game of scoundrals and many will not agree that there can be a real synthesis between politics and religion. Though the religious basis of political philosophy may have its own advantages it is certainly not without its disadvantages as well. These disadvantages have been very clear in India.

Too Much Traditionalism

In spite of being very well acquainted with the actual condition of different sections of the country and having keen minds required for analysis of these problems the traditionalism in the thinking of our contemporary philosophers led to the application of old principles to new problems. One may agree that if the problems are identical the old principles can be certainly applied to them. Distinctions, however, are more important than similarities in clear thinking. While social and political problems of our own time appear to be very much similar to those of the old we should keep our eye particularly upon the distinctions since these distinctions will make a lot of difference in remedies. It was due to the neglect of this fact that the philosophies of Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Gandhi could not be as much influential in actually solving the problems of the country as they would have been otherwise.

Difference between individual and social development

By assuming a parallel relationship between the individual and the collectivity, these philosophers were led to the erroneous assumption that individual development inevitably leads to social development. Sri Aurobindo's theory of the future development of man is based on this assumption. Through his yoga he came to experience the supramental consciousness, from which he concluded that the supramental consciousness would soon be established at the collective level, and thus a supramental race would come into existence. Such great men as Sri Aurobindo and M.K. Gandhi have always made the mistake of assuming that whatever they achieve in their individual lives can also be achieved at the collective level. For example, in his concept of basic education, M.K. Gandhi advocated that children should make articles of daily use in the schools and hoped that these would sell at high prices in the market because people would wish to encourage the children. But, it was observed in practice that the things made in these basic schools could not even be sold. Sri Aurobindo was more practical than M.K. Gandhi. For instance, while M.K. Gandhi talked of completely eliminating violence from international politics, Sri Aurobindo pointed out to the psychological fact that love and brotherhood exist between individuals, not between nations. But while elucidating his visions of man's future, Sri Aurobindo committed the same mistake of hoping that the evolution which has occurred in his own consciousness would also occur at the collective level.

Difficulties in the concept of a Supramental race

Sri Aurobindo in his utopian flight, presented the concept of gnostic supramental race as man's future. This concept contradicts the psychology of genius. Genius never occurs on a large scale. Geniuses exist as exceptions, and the factors governing their growth cannot be determined. It is not possible to generate geniuses on a large scale. Hence, a philosopher's dream that he may succeed in generating a race of superman does not appear scientific, though admittedly, social thinkers from Plato onward have constantly been visualising such a state, and for this purpose such theories as Plato's theory of education and Sri Aurobindo's theory of integral yoga have been advanced. In fact, just as the thought of taking man to lower level is inappropriate, the thought of raising him above humanity and making him a superman is equally

inadequate. Social philosophy is a human philosophy, its development takes place at the human level. The social philosopher has to see social problems from the human standpoint. M.K. Gandhi's concept of non-violent individuals and Sri Aurobindo's view of supermen as members of society is contrary to both logic and the facts of history. The birth of such great men as Socrates, Jesus Christ, Hazarat Mohammed or Buddha does not establish the view either that humanity can create similar individuals on large scale, or even that it wishes to do so. Even otherwise, the level of consciousness possible for the individual is not possible in collective life. Rationality, equilibrium, profundity and the ability to colate ideas may be characteristics of the individual's consciousness, but it is wrong to imagine that they can be concretized without modification at the collective level. In fact, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath and M.K. Gandhi exhibit a perfectionist bias. If the majority of solutions to most of the problems of human life have achieved more than could be expected on an average, this should be a sufficient cause for satisfaction. It is contrary to the very structure of human nature to attempt to take them to perfection.

The Individual and the State

Indian political thought does not distinguish between social philosophy and political philosophy. Ancient Indian philosophers did not distinguish between society and the state. In keeping with this tradition contemporary social philosophers in India also do not distinguish between society and state. Consequently, they have frequently attempted a synthesis between the individual and the state. According to M.K. Gandhi, every citizen must obey the laws of the state. According to these thinkers, the state was evolved for the welfare of individuals, and there is no inevitable conflict between the individual and state. In fact there is harmony between them. This does not imply that individuals have transferred all rights to the state. Even ancient Indian political scientists emphatically suggested that the state has the right to run the government only insofar as it brings out the welfare of its citizens. In failing to do so, the state forfeits its right to govern. In the same way M.K. Gandhi also favoured the disobedience of the laws of the state only in those circumstances in which opposition is ethically justified, since ethical laws are above judicial laws. The ideas of Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo also correspond to M.K. Gandhi's views. All of them have emphasized the freedom

of the individual. Even greater proponents of freedom were Jawahar Lal Nehru and Manvendra Roy. All these thinkers favoured the restriction of the powers of the state so as to maintain individual freedom. According to them, the state has no right to interfere in the mental or intellectual or spiritual activities of the individual. All that the state can do is to organize the distribution and possession of material goods.

Decentralization of State authority

In the same manner, all these thinkers are also in favour of decentralization of the state's power. This concept of decentralization has been integral to Indian political thought from ancient times. In conformity with the tradition, these thinkers have supported the idea of decentralization of state authority down to the level of the village. All of them favoured the eradication of Zamindari, development of the panchayats, community programme, development of small and cottage industries, and other schemes leading to social, economic and political decentralization. However, it is important to note at this point that while the inspiration for this concept of decentralisation was purely Indian for Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath and M.K. Gandhi, it was purely Western for Jawahar Lal Nehru and Manvendra Roy who derived it from Western democracies. From the viewpoint of *swadeshi* or indigenous production, the former basis appears far more suitable for India, although in essence, the difference in the source of inspiration makes no difference in the view of these thinkers.

Explanation and Support of Freedom

All the contemporary Indian philosophers considered in the present work provided a spiritual elaboration of freedom. According to them, true freedom is not lack of discipline, but self-discipline. According to Jawahar Lal Nehru and Manvendra Roy, this self-discipline means the control of the reason over man, but according to Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath and M.K. Gandhi it implies the control exercised by the soul. This latter concept conforms to ancient Indian social thought whereas the former is derived from Western thought. Despite this difference, all these thinkers have advocated the granting of the maximum possible freedom to all individuals in every sphere, and the reduction to the minimum of state authority over the individual. All these thinkers conceive of law as self-control, and so they emphasize its obedience. By

calling a law a form of self-control, it is possible to point to its source. It clarifies that the law should be based on public opinion and public consciousness, which implies that if a law is not derived from these sources, it can be opposed because it is not supported by the principle of self-control. Self-control gives to law an ethical base without which the compulsion implicit in law is destroyed. In fact, the only compulsion to which man is subject is the ethical compulsion which is identical to self-compulsion. Law derives its compulsive force exclusively from this source. If laws violating this ethical basis are formulated, they should be opposed. It is because of this that contemporary Indian philosophers have attempted a synthesis of ethics and politics on the one hand and ethical rules and judicial laws on the other. However, all of them regard ethics as superior to politics, and ethical rules as superior to laws.

Expianation of Social Justice

On the question of social justice, certain differences are observed between the traditionalist social thinkers of contemporary India and those influenced by Western thought, but fundamentally they are all proponents of democratic values. From this viewpoint, M.K. Gandhi raised the concept of social justice to its idealistic limits. His concept of social justice has been elaborated in his notion of *Sarvodaya*. Jawahar Lal Nehru accepted this Gandhian concept and with this end in view, he provided forceful support to the cause of the minorities and their rights.

Manvendra Roy clarified the democratic view of justice. Sri Aurobindo adopted the integral approach towards justice, according to which justice means that every individual in society, irrespective of his class or position, should be given the opportunity to develop according to his own nature, and the circumstances should be created so that *Swadharma* can be achieved. In this way, the concept of justice adopted by these philosophers is humanistic, in which justice has been taken to mean the development of every aspect of the individual's personality, every member of a class, every class in society, and every nation in the world, each according to its own nature.

Oversimplified Psychoiogy

It has been already pointed out these thinkers interpreted human nature in a religious and spiritual sense. Man, according

to them, is a spark of the Divine. This co-called idealistic interpretation of human nature is over-simplified and far from being adequate. Gandhian principle that whatever is possible in the life of an individual is equally practicable on the mass scale only shows his ignorance of mass psychology. He was in the habit of experimenting upon methods and techniques in his own personal life and thinking that whatever is possible for him to do should be so for any other he used to apply it on a large scale. This thinking is fallacious and based upon wrong psychology. The fact is that something possible for a very religious person may be possible only for an exceptional person and should not be presented as a formula for mass application. This defect in the social philosophy of M.K. Gandhi has been the chief reason of its failure to actually and sufficiently influence different fields of social and political life. Sri Aurobindo's speculation about gnostic individuals and gnostic race are utopian.

In tradition with ancient Indian ideal of harmony these philosophers everywhere searched for a formula to achieve harmony in social and political fields. It is undeniable that harmony is a healthy principle and nothing is better if it can be achieved but no one can deny the role of the disintegrating processes such as conflict, competition, aggression and even violence. It can be said in favour of advocates of non-violent means that the future of humanity entirely rests upon our faith in them. But human nature as it appears in history shows that non-violence is not the best means in every circumstance and so long as human nature remains what it is, it is dangerous to propose the application of non-violent means in every situation. Sri Aurobindo, among all these philosophers, has pointed out the role of conflict and violence in delivering goods.

Disadvantages of Religious Definitions

Besides the definition of the individual on the basis of religion, society too was defined by our contemporary thinkers as an expression of the Divine. This definition, while on the one hand highlights Divine virtues and characteristics, it on the other hand, fails to pay sufficient attention to the animal characteristics. According to contemporary social psychologists masses are more governed by animal instincts rather than rational thinking and still less by spiritual incentives. It is therefore, doubtful that religious or spiritual formula may be successful in the case of

mass behaviour. Religious influence on political thought is very much explicit in the Gandhian ideal of *Ramrajya*. Whatever, may be its inner meaning for Gandhi himself the historical fact is that the people generally understand Rama as a king and the term *Ramrajya* smacks of favour to monarchy. Undoubtedly, Gandhi was himself the greatest champion of democracy yet his unhappy marriage of religion with politics has been a cause of so much misunderstanding about his social and political thinking. The present Indian Constitution advocates a secular approach in the field of religion. One may wonder as to how far the religious leanings of our contemporary Indian philosophers may fit with this concept of secular society. Gandhi himself was one of the architects of Indian Constitution but he never raised his voice against secularism or found any inconsistency between secularism and religion.

Contradictory Ideals of Social Stratification

In the philosophy of society our thinkers have everywhere admired the ancient Varna system. It is undeniable that there can be no theoretical objection against the Varna system as a basis of social stratification. But who can deny that this very system itself must have something in it which led to its degeneration in caste system and finally in casteism and untouchability. To wage a war against casteism and untouchability on the one hand and to praise Varna system on the other smacks of revivalism which is certainly a feature of contemporary Indian social philosophy. Whatever may be said about the principle of equality among different Varnas, in actual practice the followers of this system laid more emphasis upon distinctions rather than upon similarities with the result that more and more disintegration between different varnas increased.

Compromises in Economic Philosophy

Alongwith political and social thinking the economic philosophy of our thinkers was also governed by a search for the principle of harmony among different sections. They were intimately aware of the plight of the poor and the labourers of the country and knew very well the exploitation and oppression unleashed by the capitalist and the higher classes. They even sometimes challenged this exploitation and also condemned it but ultimately they wanted to arrive at some sort of compromise between the exploiters and

exploited. Whatever may be the merit of Gandhian theory of trusteeship, its inapplicability is apparent from the fact that several decades after the advocacy of this theory not even a single capitalist in the country could change his heart or come anywhere near to the ideal of trustee so much cherished by Gandhi. When social philosophy gives such an important place to ideals that it forgets the facts, followers of other disciplines have some justification in pointing out that social philosophy cannot deliver the goods and however one may philosophise about social and political problems they have hardly much practical value.

Deeper Solution for Surface Problems

The above discussion does not mean minimising the merits and advantages of the contemporary Indian philosophy. Contemporary Indian philosophers certainly presented a most comprehensive philosophy and rightly based it upon the traditional philosophy of India. They rightly tried to build up a philosophy in tradition with ancient Indian idealism and spiritualism. In the fields of social and political philosophy they rightly avoided all types of extremism and endeavoured at synthetic approach. Their analyses and suggestions, however, have not been very consistent. One reason of this inconsistency was their search for deeper solutions of the surface problems. This is particularly evident in Sri Aurobindo's remedy of all human ills through integral Yoga. Going to details and always returning to the basic issues has its advantages in thinking but if the surface view of the problems is neglected the solutions offered are far from being successful. It is characteristic of our culture that we are always in search of eternal solutions and never satisfied with temporary arrangements. But some problems in social and political field are temporary and therefore require a temporary arrangement. Moreover, overemphasis on eternity leads to negligence of social change. Social change is as much necessary for the growth of a society as social stability. In Indian social system while we have craved for stability we have not so much favoured social change. That is one reason why our society and social thinking has not been sufficiently progressive and revolutionary.

Lack of Proper National Perspective

Another important reason for the inconsistency visible in the philosophies of our contemporary thinkers is their emphasis

on mass appeal. All of them were mass leaders. They presented their thought generally in the form of public lectures and replies to questions of their followers. They were never academic thinkers. Tagore was an eminent poet but his grasp over social and political problems may be doubted. This can be seen in the inconsistency found in his concept of nationalism and internationalism. While favouring nationalism he praised it like other thinkers of his time. On the other hand while praising internationalism he sometimes condemned nationalism as narrow thinking. Vivekananda was the only contemporary philosopher besides Sri Aurobindo, who championed the cause of nationalism in social thinking, otherwise both Tagore and Gandhi were more internationalists rather than nationalists. This lack of proper perspective towards nationalism has been a cause of so much failure of our relationship with other countries, and the inadequacies of our foreign policy.

Lack of Interdisciplinary Approach

As leaders of the masses these philosophers were very well aware of the conditions of different sections of Indian society and they tried their best to suggest remedies for them. They, however, seldom cared to consult specialists in different branches of knowledge such as the economists, the political scientists, the sociologists and the social workers. While presenting their own views they seldom cared to find out the views of academic thinkers upon these problems. This has been the defect of philosophy both in East and West, and it has led to its derogation as a field of knowledge. Perhaps it has been left to future Indian philosophers to present a more rational, realistic, interdisciplinary, synthetic and balanced philosophy which may imbibe the advantages of all the different trends in contemporary Indian philosophy.

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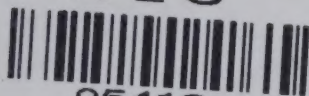
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